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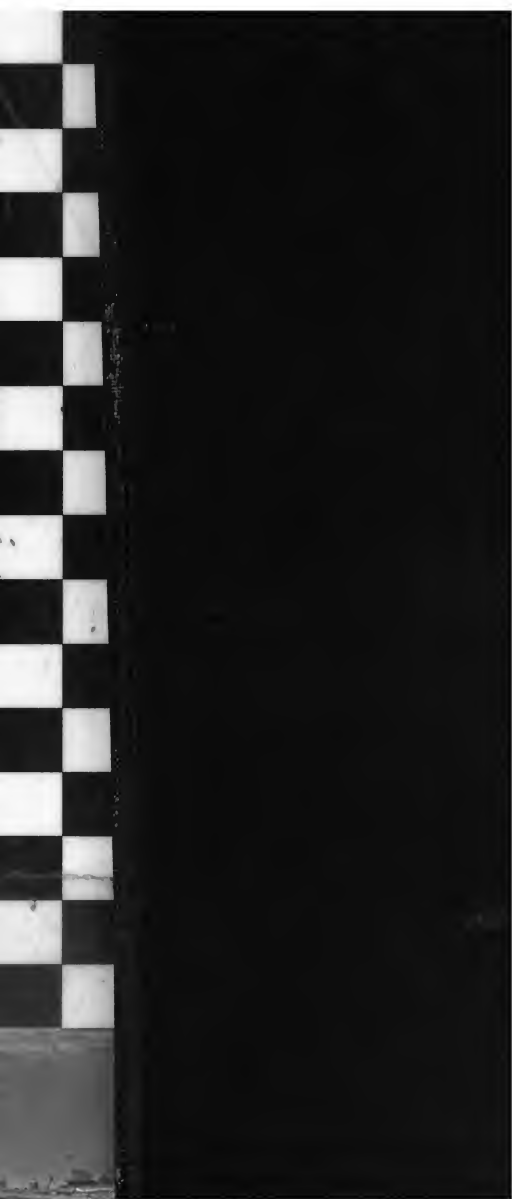
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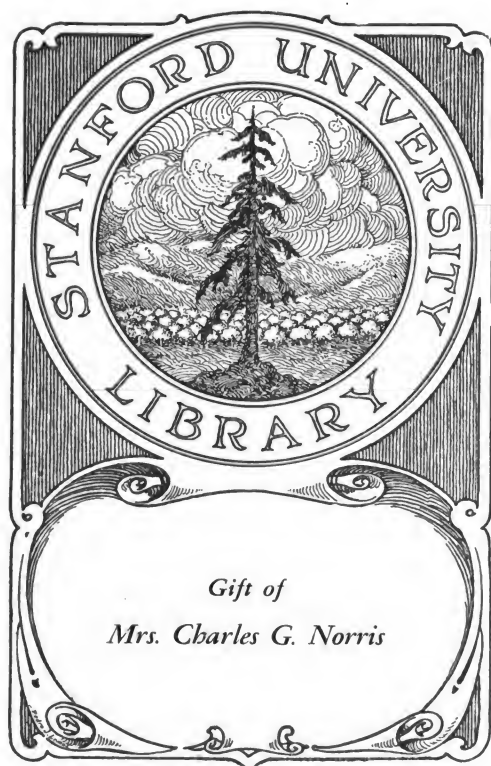
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SISTER MARY OF ST. PHILIP



SISTER SUPERIOR
(Sister Mary of St. Philip).

SISTER MARY OF ST. PHILIP

(FRANCES MARY LESCHER)

1825-1904

Auntie, Sister

BY

A SISTER OF NOTRE DAME

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF LIVERPOOL

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO YOU
WHO HAVE SO FAITHFULLY FOLLOWED IN
THE FOOTSTEPS OF
YOUR GREAT AND GOOD KINSWOMAN
THIS HUMBLE RECORD OF HER LIFE AND LABOURS
IS AFFECTIONATELY OFFERED

INTRODUCTION

SISTER MARY OF ST. PHILIP devoted so many years of a long life to the special work for which Blessed Julie Billiart destined her daughters, that the Catholic public have been hoping that the Sisters of Notre Dame would not further delay in giving them a record of the life of so distinguished a daughter of their holy Foundress. Their expectations will be fully realised by the present charming biography.

In the career of Sister Mary of St. Philip it seems natural to distinguish between her life as an educationist and as a religious. It is not, of course, that education, in any true sense of the term, can be dissociated from religion; for, to be worthy of the name, education must be directed to the development of the moral character of the child more than to the development of its intellectual faculties. "Manners makyth man," and the Catholic Church knows no other means of moral development than the Christian religion with its motives, its sanctions, and its practices. So with an educationist who is a religious; whilst the spiritual formation of the child is her chief care, it is in her own life as a religious that she finds her ideals, her spirit, and her power. Hence the *vie intime* of Sister Mary of St. Philip, as of every religious engaged in the work of education, is little known to the world at large, and but partially known even to her own Sisters. Yet in these days, when some Catholics are to be found who belittle the work of teachers who are religious, it should not be forgotten that such teachers are, first and foremost, religious, following the path of the evangelical counsels, and so leading lives of self-discipline and prayer, spending hours daily in close and intimate union with God, and in that union finding at once their spiritual perfection, and their chief source of inspiration and of influence as educationists.

At the present time when the Catholic Church by dint of

immense effort has established for itself an important position in this country, particularly in matters concerning Education, it is well—lest Catholics forget—that one aspect of the life of Sister Mary of St. Philip should be emphasised, and it is this. To her—and with her we identify the Training College, Mount Pleasant, of which she was for nearly fifty years the life and soul—is due in large measure the present numerical strength of Catholics in England. And it may also be justly claimed for her that in the greatest crisis through which the Catholic Church has passed since Catholic Emancipation she was the one person given to us by Divine Providence to enable the Church to exist and to flourish in this land.

Early in the 'fifties the Catholic Poor School Committee, as it was then called, opened a Training School for male teachers at Hammersmith. But they perceived that a similar school for women teachers was even more necessary, for a large majority of teachers in elementary schools have always been, and probably will always be, women. Accordingly the Committee approached the Reverend Mother-General of the Sisters of Notre Dame to secure, if possible, the foundation of such a Training School. The successor of Blessed Julie could not turn a deaf ear to an appeal on behalf of the poor children of England. A beginning was made at the already established Convent at Mount Pleasant, Liverpool. In 1856 the Training School was opened, and Sister Mary of St. Philip, fresh from the noviciate, was placed in charge.

It soon became evident to all that in her they had found a born teacher with all the mental and moral equipment for so important a task. Endowed by God with talents of a high order—a keen observer, sensitive to all the higher influences in the physical, the intellectual, the artistic, and the moral world around her; the happy possessor of a great breadth of mind, of an intuitive perception of character, of a saving sense of humour, and of a well-balanced judgment—she had in her girlhood cultivated these remarkable powers under the guidance of a wise father. Finally, under the powerful influences of religion, this gifted woman had been fashioned into an instrument for training others. At the bidding of Superiors she threw herself with characteristic enthusiasm into the task before her. The cause was a sacred one, the salvation of the souls of countless Catholic children.

Any one who makes a study of the various forces at work in the development of the Church in England during the past century will be constrained to fix upon the Education Act of 1870 as the turning-point in the progress of religion in this land. Along the whole line of history, in England, as in every other country, the battle for the Church's existence and progress has centred round one thing—the child. The enemies of the Church, no less than the Church herself, have ever recognised the truth, that they who control the nation's children have the nation's destinies in their hands. Now before 1870, successive Governments had scandalously ignored their duty of making provision for the adequate education of millions of the children of the working classes, including hundreds of thousands of the children of Catholic parents. If any feeble efforts were made they were represented by a few grants, grudgingly doled out to those voluntary bodies who had undertaken to educate the pupils whom they might coax into their schools.

The Education Act of 1870 changed all this. Whatever be the defects of that Act, whatever be its miserable compromise in the matter of teaching religion, it accomplished one thing—it raised the education of the child population of the nation to a much higher plane. It was the embryo from which has gradually been evolved the national system of Education with its complex organisation, its Board of Education, its Local Education Authorities, its lavish expenditure of money, its army of teachers, and its millions of scholars.

This Act of 1870 imposed as an obligation upon local authorities, then known as School Boards, to provide for the education of such children of the poor as had not already been dealt with by any of the existing voluntary agencies. As soon as the School Boards, with the unlimited purse of the ratepayers at their disposal, began to cover the land with palatial schools, a situation arose which created a most serious crisis for the Catholic Church in England, the large majority of whose subjects were the poorest of the poor—the hewers of wood and the drawers of water. The alternative with which the Church was now confronted was either to attempt the seemingly impossible task of educating hundreds of thousands of Catholic children in Catholic schools, or to see them drifting into the Board Schools with what was rightly considered their godless system of education. The choice was soon made.

The first and more immediate task was the erection of a sufficient number of Catholic Schools. The Hierarchy appealed to the whole Catholic body of England, and a Crisis Fund was inaugurated. Thanks to the generosity of wealthy Catholics, thanks especially to the regular self-sacrificing contributions of the working classes, Catholic schools began to spring up on all sides.

But the most difficult task had still to be faced. As the Catholic schools increased in number, a large and ever increasing body of Catholic trained teachers became an imperative necessity—teachers specially competent to impart secular knowledge; but, above all, teachers animated by exalted ideals of their profession, and imbued with a truly religious spirit. Once more the Catholic Poor School Committee turned in their perplexity to Sister Mary of St. Philip with some hope that the demands of the new Act might be satisfied by an extension of the Training School at Mount Pleasant; and once more the Superiors of Notre Dame at Namur promised their hearty co-operation, and gave it unstintingly by providing accommodation for one hundred and twenty students, instead of for sixty as before.

Sister Mary of St. Philip pressed ever forward, not content with mediocrity, and whilst aiming always at being abreast of the age in educational matters, at times she led it. From the first she was in close touch with the representatives of the Board of Education, assimilating their ideas and adapting her methods to their progressive ideals, so that inspectors of the College, from being directors and critics of the education given within its walls, did not disdain to be her enthusiastic admirers and pupils. In this way it came about that the Pupil Teachers' Centre system, initiated at Mount Pleasant, was subsequently adopted by the Board of Education and widely followed; and these relations of sympathy and co-operation with inspectors, begun in the early days, have, happily, continued unbroken to the present time. Not only was Sister Mary of St. Philip constantly in touch with the best thought of the day in educational matters; she was also ever on the alert to secure expert assistance for her students in any department of their intellectual, artistic, or moral training.

But, above all, she was anxious that the future teachers who went out into the world from Mount Pleasant should be

animated by a truly Catholic spirit. The constant burden of her exhortations to her students, as a true daughter of Blessed Julie, was love of the poor, the paramount importance of religion and religious influences, the power of the example of their own lives, and a ready obedience to, and deference for, ecclesiastical authority. And when college days were over, at the time of the annual reunion, whilst bringing to their notice the most modern equipment of schools, or the latest improvements in methods of teaching, she readily seized the opportunity to reaffirm the high Catholic ideals she had placed before them in the days of their training.

When at last Sister Mary of St. Philip's life drew to a close, she had the consolation of seeing that the little Training School, begun in poverty and simplicity in 1856, had expanded, under God's Providence and her fostering care, into the magnificent pile of buildings of the Mount Pleasant of to-day—a very hive of educational industry. The Training College alone had sheltered beneath its roof thousands of teachers, who, during half a century, had gone forth to build up temples “not made with hands” in the souls of the Catholic children of England. And the Catholic Church in England as she looks around to-day, and sees some one thousand Catholic elementary schools in which little short of four hundred thousand Catholic children are being taught by some eight thousand Catholic teachers, whose college training was in very many cases made under the gentle care of Sister Mary of St. Philip, may thank God, Who gave her to us in the great crisis, when the future of the Church in England was in the balance.

Whilst the name of Sister Mary of St. Philip as an educationist will go down to posterity associated with Mount Pleasant, and with all that those two words mean for England's faith, her memory will be cherished by those who were privileged to live in community with her, chiefly as that of an edifying religious.

She possessed in a remarkable degree those qualities which at all times distinguish true womanliness—sympathy, unselfishness and simplicity, which under the purifying and elevating influence of religion attained their true perfection. With these qualities she combined a manly courage and dignified bearing, so that quite early in life she was plainly marked out as “one born to rule.” Without seeking for it, she had ever the devoted

loyalty of her religious subjects. Especially conspicuous in her was that divine gift of sympathy, which God bestows upon those whom He destines to do great things for the salvation of souls.

These features of the life of Sister Mary of St. Philip are depicted in the following pages, with a welcome wealth of detail, from the days of her girlhood to the day when she gave up her soul to God, in "the dear old Camp on the hill." It is to be hoped that to many a member of our religious Institutes the picture here presented of a "valiant woman" and a true religious will serve as an inspiration and an example.

✠ THOMAS, ARCHBISHOP OF LIVERPOOL.

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SISTER MARY OF ST. PHILIP

CHAPTER I

A CHRISTIAN HOUSEHOLD

"I remember a house where all were good."—(FR. G. HOPKINS, S.J.)

A VISITOR to the Memorial Library of the Liverpool Training College is sure to pause before the fireplace to study the portraits of two Sisters of Notre Dame let into the oaken overmantel. One face looks at him with bright eyes full of intelligence and sympathy, and mobile lips on which plays a smile at once humorous and benign. He reads the name—*Sister Mary of St. Francis*. The subject of the other portrait, slighter in figure and taller, sits erect with face in profile—a face of clear-cut distinction combining sweetness and strength, even as the pose combines energy and tranquillity. This time the observer reads—*Sister Mary of St. Philip*. A niche separates the two, and underneath are the words: *Caritas Christi urget nos*. Those portraits—that motto—give in brief the history of Our Lady's Training College. To Sister Mary of St. Francis Petre it owes its foundation, and, in part, its maintenance; to Sister Mary of St. Philip Lescher it owes its spirit and its life. And the whole was the outcome of the Charity of Christ pressing on two apostolic hearts.

Frances Mary Lescher, the subject of this biography, came, on her father's side, of an old Alsatian family, holding proud traditions of faith and loyalty to Church and State, long before Lescher of Kertzfeld received his patent of nobility in the reign of Louis XIII. In the second half of the eighteenth century a Laurence Lescher of Kertzfeld, by his overbearing temper and iron discipline, so worked upon the sensitive mind of his eldest son, Joseph, as to drive him to run away from home. It is related that the youth arrived in London with

only half a crown in his pocket; but, with the indomitable spirit of his sires, he made good use of his natural capacity, and in the year 1778 found himself in a position to marry, and to bring to London his brother William, then a boy of ten. The two brothers eventually became partners in a starch factory. Joseph purchased the estate of Boyles Court in Essex, but William remained in London, where he could more easily keep in direct touch with the practical details of his business.

There was living in Essex at this time a Swiss lady of singular energy, whose generosity to the French priests who sought refuge in London during the dark days of the French Revolution had earned for her the title of "Mother of the Priests." Mrs. Copp's zealous charity knew no bounds. She established a lace-making school for poor girls at Leytonstone, and actively supported the revival of Catholic faith and practice in Essex.

Her younger daughter, Mary,¹ who married William Lescher, proved herself not unworthy of such a mother. Six children blessed their union, and when in 1817 William Lescher passed to his reward, at the comparatively early age of fifty, his widow, his junior by nine years, devoted herself to the education and care of her family. William, her eldest son, was seventeen when his father died, whilst Harriet, the youngest child, was nine. Mrs. William Lescher lived to be eighty-three, a gentle little lady dressed in black, her sweet face framed in a dainty frilled cap. Her sons always knelt to receive her blessing. "The first time I was taken to see my grandmother at Brighton," relates Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid, "my own dear father, quite a tall man, went down on his knees to be blessed and kissed, and then—dropped on all fours! 'Ah, Sidney, Sidney,' his mother cried, playfully shaking her forefinger 'you were always the one for fun!'"

Sidney's eldest brother, William, set to work with characteristic energy on the death of his father, and early made his mark in life, not merely as a man of affairs, but also as one who was zealous for the better gifts. The rector of the church of St. Thomas the Great, of which the elder William Lescher had been for many years "treasurer and distinguished

¹ The elder daughter, Cleopha Copp, married John Nyren. See p. 333, Appendix, Note 2.

benefactor," found in the son a worthy successor to his father. The Confraternity of the Living Rosary had been recently established in the parish, and on William Lescher, as its devoted secretary and treasurer, devolved the duty of keeping it in working order. His intense devotion to Our Blessed Lady made this a labour of love, but labour none the less it was, entailing an amount of correspondence that must have made no slight demand on his leisure hours. Our Lady, as we shall see, did not forget her client, but threw her protecting mantle round him and his.

He actively supported St. Mary's Church, Moorfields, and later on was one of the chief instruments in the establishment of the Marist Mission at Spitalfields; he was member or director of various charitable institutions, and for some years president, and at the time of his death vice-president, of the Conference of the Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul established at Spanish Place. But William Lescher, when but a young man of twenty-two, realised that the truest and best form of philanthropy was to provide a good Christian education for the children of the poorer classes, and, though the Penal Laws were still on the Statute Book, he vigorously promoted the building of the Catholic schools at Wapping and Spitalfields. He also supported the first Catholic Sunday School in London, which was opened at Whitechapel. It is well for us to bear in mind that in these early days of the revival of Catholicity in England for a man to put himself forward openly to advance the Catholic cause was to expose himself to obloquy and insult. That such men as William Lescher did expose themselves thus to advance the Kingdom of Christ upon earth should be to us, who now reap what they sowed, a reason for holding their names in perpetual and grateful benediction.

In 1824 William Lescher married Mary Hoy, of Stoke-by-Nayland, Suffolk, a woman of singular beauty and sweetness both of mind and of person, in whose veins ran the blood of many faithful Catholic generations. "My father never spoke of my mother but as a saint," wrote their youngest daughter, Agnes; "I have frequently heard him affirm that she had never lost her baptismal innocence. Often he took me on his knee to show me my mother's portrait, telling me I must be very good, for my mother was a saint."

Seven children were born of the marriage of William Lescher and Mary Hoy: Frances, Anne, William, Edward, Monica, Arthur, and Agnes.

Her joy in the expectancy of God's first gift of motherhood was shadowed for Mary Lescher by a heavy cloud. In the bright and attractive home at Stoke-by-Nayland, the parting from which had been the one sorrow of her young life, she had left not only a beloved and saintly mother, and an elder brother (who became a naturalist of no mean repute), but a bevy of delightful sisters. Most winning among them all, perhaps, was Fanny Hoy, a gifted, sunny-natured girl, full of energy, power and promise. After William Lescher's marriage his brother Sidney went down to Stoke at Christmastide to be introduced to the family of his sister-in-law. Fanny Hoy, who was slightly indisposed and remained in her room, sent a cheerful message of greeting to the guest. Suddenly a scream rang through the house. Fanny had been suddenly seized with spasms of the heart, and died before there was time to summon the priest. But death, though it came so suddenly, did not find her unprepared. Only a short time previously she had made a general confession of her whole life; none could fear for her, knowing her blameless course.

Another sister, Anne Hoy, was already in such an advanced stage of consumption that she was even then engaged in making her immediate preparation for the call which she knew must soon come. But the tragedy of her sister's death filled her with fear lest, if her own followed close upon it, the double shock should prove fateful to her beloved sister, Mary; so she prayed earnestly that her life might be prolonged till after the birth of the child. Her prayer was heard; the baby, Frances Mary Lescher, first smiled to the light on May 8, 1825, and very soon after, Anne Hoy gave up her pure and holy soul to God. Her family had ever revered her as a saint, and the memory of her burning love for God, of her deep and tender devotion, was long treasured by them, embalming her name with a special fragrance. When, in the following year, a second little girl was born to Mary Lescher, we are not surprised to find her named after her saintly aunt.

Another of the Hoy girls—the "Aunt Martha" of Frances Lescher's letters—beautiful, gentle and good, was a frequent visitor at her brother-in-law's house. Later, her marriage with

Joseph Samuel Lescher, cousin and partner of William, was a very happy family event, which strengthened the bond between her and her sister Mary.

Almost from the cradle little Frances Mary—or, as she was always called, Fanny—showed marks of rare intelligence. When but three years old she would listen with alert ears to the conversation of her parents, and if she found herself ignored or unable to follow what was being said, she at once asserted herself by unmistakable demonstrations of displeasure. When she was not yet five years old, her family removed to Leytonstone on the borders of Epping Forest. The house, an old castellated mansion in the Tudor style, had once been a shooting-box of Henry VIII, and enjoyed the reputation of being haunted. But William Lescher had little belief in ghosts; he had the house blessed, and said nothing to his wife of the rumour concerning it. The blessing, however, was apparently of no avail, for night after night the household was awakened by a noise as of heavy chains being dragged about on the stairs. The servants refused to stay, and finally the family removed to Upton, where they rented “The Wooden House,” a pleasant, rambling old mansion having a long avenue of limes at its rear. The nursery, a quaint octagonal room, had its walls and ceilings entirely covered with frescoes of heathen deities, on which account it was called *Olympus*, or, as the children styled it, *Lympus*. Mrs. Lescher, who was skilful with her brush, went to much pains to clothe these personages with much-needed draperies in water-colour. She used to relate with great spirit how proud she was of the effect of her work, and how on the morrow the nursery maid burst into her mistress’s presence joyfully exclaiming: “Oh, Ma’am, the work I’ve had cleaning that paint off the walls of *Lympus*! But I’ve made it look beautiful at last.” So once more the deities had to be clothed by the hands of the good mother, whose soul was imbued with a deep spirit of Christian reverence for the first fair bloom of innocence in the souls of little children.

The Upton home was made even more happy by its relations with the Pitchford family, then resident at Bromley. William Lescher and Mrs. Pitchford were first cousins.¹ Her eldest

¹ Susan Nyren, the daughter of John Nyren and Cleopha Copp, married John Pitchford, son of the well-known Norwich surgeon and botanist.

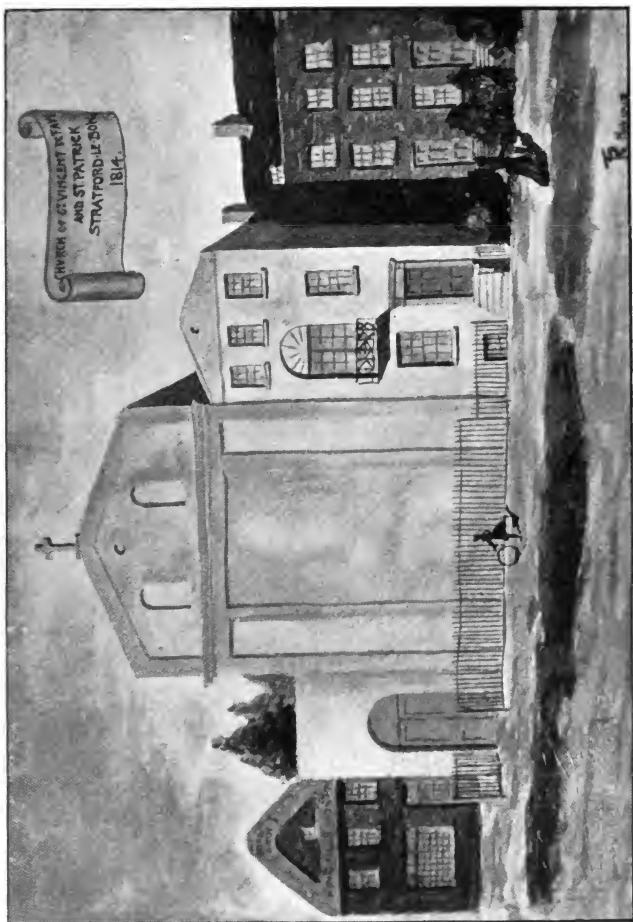
daughter, another Frances, some five years Fanny's senior, has left some reminiscences of these early days.

"William and Mary Lescher," she writes, "were devotedly fond of their children, and brought them up with almost excessive care in everything which could affect their health and the formation of their character. When they first came to "The Wooden House" Fanny and Annie were fair-haired children of six and five. Annie was always thought the prettier, but Fanny had a peculiar dignity which she never lost. She often reminded me of a Saxon princess with her long, fair curls and aquiline features. But none of the children equalled their mother in beauty."

Other gifts showed themselves in these early days. "As a little child," says her sister Monica, "Fanny had a remarkably lively imagination. She would sometimes entertain our mother with long stories of adventures and conversations she had had with different people, but when Mamma questioned the nurse she found that all she had heard existed only in the fertile imagination of her little daughter." To those who are familiar with the mentality of young children this will cause no surprise. They live in a fairy-land of make-believe which, as R. L. Stevenson has so well brought home to us, is much more real to them than the matter-of-fact world in which they move.

Fanny and Annie were bridesmaids when their nurse, Anne Blundin, married the gardener. Edward, their brother, the future Oblate of St. Charles, was too young to remember this wedding, which took place at the Chapel at Stratford,¹ but he often visited his old nurse in her cottage a few miles away, and was quite familiar with the green and white tea-service which the little bridesmaids had selected as their wedding-gift. Half a century later he recognised those same cups and saucers in the home of a poor dying seamstress to whom he was giving the last consolations of religion. Inquiry discovered that she was the only surviving daughter of his old nurse, and the tea-service still intact was the sole article of value in her possession. Some friends, at the instance of Father Lescher, raffled the china, and gave it back, together with the proceeds, to the invalid, who begged that the tea-service might be sent to Notre Dame, Mount Pleasant, Liver-

¹ See p. 333, Appendix, Note 3.



STRATFORD CHAPEL, 1814

pool, where the little Fanny of those far-off days was now the beloved Sister Superior.

Mr. and Mrs. William Lescher loved to recreate themselves with their children. Many were the delightful excursions to Epping Forest, then a paradise for children, many the long drives which Fanny took with her elders, many the botanical rambles which she shared with her father.

"She showed unusual intelligence," continues Frances Pitchford, "and all the while she was a most merry child and fond of play. At first she used to ride on a donkey, led by a boy, and on certain days of the week she rode over to Bromley to learn Latin in the schoolroom of her cousins. She was her father's great ally in securing the earliest reviews and periodicals from Mr. Crick's circulating library in Stratford. My own father, Mr. Pitchford, used to say that Fanny and her donkey were his chief rivals in this respect. Later she was promoted to a Shetland pony—Jessie—on which she often rode out with her father.

"The three elder children, Fanny, Annie and William, had regular lessons with their governess, but their father kept in his own hands their instruction in Catechism and Scripture, devoting himself to this task every Sunday. Fanny's answers were the delight and wonder of all who were privileged to hear them. We all considered her exceedingly good, but not in the least conceited or self-sufficient, indeed her nature was very yielding. I believe that if ever she got into any childish scrape it was through giving way to Annie, who was more adventurous and wilful."

In 1884 "The Wooden House" was abandoned for another, also at Upton, a large Elizabethan mansion, more commodious, and enclosed in extensive grounds, and in the following year was born the youngest sister, who received the name of Agnes in thanksgiving for a great favour obtained through the intercession of that saint. A short time before the birth of this child, William Lescher was suddenly taken ill whilst walking in London. Cholera was raging at the time, and, recognising the symptoms, he went to the nearest doctor's house. Over the mantelpiece in the waiting-room he noticed a large picture of Saint Agnes, a very poor copy of Domenichino's masterpiece. He felt moved to invoke the Virgin Martyr, promising, if his life were spared, to name his next little girl after her. He

recovered completely and kept his promise. The doctor, who was a Protestant, refused Mr. Lescher's request to buy the picture, but shortly after, being evidently much impressed by the devotion of the Saint's favoured client, he presented it to him. The picture, which was always reverently guarded in Mr. Lescher's room, is now in the possession of the Benedictine Abbey, Bergholt, of which Agnes Lescher, in religion Dame Mary Gertrude, died Abbess, and of which her elder sister, Monica, Dame Margaret Mary, was for a long time Prioress under her.

Fanny was now ten years old, and, as her character developed, her elders noted with pleasure many traits which recalled the aunt after whom she had been named. Fanny Hoy had taken as her motto—

“For Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.”

and this she would write upon slips of paper to put among her books and work as a constant reminder. Father Edward Lescher used to recall in later days how his little sisters Fanny and Annie carved on a tree in the Upton garden “Idleness is the root of all evil,” and how both he and his brother William believed that the moral was pointed at them.

But shadows were gathering round the charming and happy home at Upton. Mrs. Lescher's delicate health had long given cause for anxiety, and in the spring of 1886 the doctors pronounced the fatal word “consumption.” When the progress of the disease left no hope, her husband, faithful to their mutual promise, told her of her approaching end. She received the tidings with Christian piety and resignation, but the sacrifice caused her a veritable agony. A devotedly attached wife, a loving, sensitive mother, she found it hard to leave her husband and her seven little children. For a long time nothing seemed to allay her anxiety, but a little before the end all fear and solicitude dropped from her spirit like a garment, and she entered into a peace and calm so remarkable as to be a subject of wonder to all. Her husband, who alone knew the secret of the change, confided it in a letter to his wife's sister, Teresa, a Benedictine nun at Caverswall Castle. He related how one morning he was beginning to talk to Mary of her wishes and plans for the education of the children,

when, to his surprise, she answered him that she no longer had any desires in the matter, that she left all in the hands of God. Then, as he pressed her further, she told him that the night before, as she lay full of anxious thought, she had begged Our Lady's help with many tears, and that suddenly she had seen the Blessed Virgin at her bedside, who comforted her very tenderly, promising to watch over her children, and leaving her filled with heavenly sweetness and a great hope. "Since that moment," she said, "I have no more cares, for I am confident that the Blessed Mother of God will take care of you all; she singularly settled me in hope." These words of the Compline psalm, *singulariter in spe*, were henceforward perpetually on her lips, and were adopted later as the family motto.

Well did Our Lady fulfil her trust. All the four daughters consecrated their lives to God in religion, Fanny and Annie in the Institute of Notre Dame, Monica and Agnes in the great Order of St. Benedict. One son, Edward, became a priest, and after spending a year as Army Chaplain in India during the Mutiny, and another on the mission at Saffron Hill, London, joined the Oblates of St. Charles at Bayswater, where he remained till his saintly death, loved and revered by all who knew him.

William, the eldest son, married, and died in 1869, on his return journey from Rome, where he had had a memorable audience of Pope Pius IX. When in the following year his widow visited the Eternal City she reminded the Holy Father of her husband, and showed him his photograph. The Pope looked at it intently and then wrote on the back, *Beati mortui qui in Domino moriuntur*.

Arthur, the third and youngest boy, died of fever in Canada at the age of twenty-four.

We have strayed far from Upton and 1886. "It was pathetic," writes Mrs. Grehan, "to see Mary Lescher, with all her beauty and tenderness, gradually wasting away. She was not confined to her room, but spent much of her time during that last summer in the grounds, listening to the joyous sounds of her children at play. Sometimes they would run to her with little offerings of flowers, which she received with her unvarying sweetness." The little ones were so accustomed to their mother's invalid state, that they were in happy ignorance

of their impending loss; but as the end drew nearer and nearer Fanny and Annie began to realise the terrible sorrow that hung over them. Father Edward Lescher, recalling those sad days, said: "I remember being in the hall at Upton one day when they came out of Mother's room. To my astonishment they were in floods of tears, and then I learnt of Mother's approaching death, although I did not realise it. When she did die, the grief of the two girls was most impressive, and I know I felt very wicked for showing so little sign of sorrow." He was only seven years old!

The waning year found Mary Lescher daily weaker. On the Feast of Our Lady's Presentation, November 21, Mass was offered in her bedroom. At its close the dying mother solemnly dedicated her seven little ones, each in turn, to God and His Holy Mother. Then she charged the nurse, Rose Connolly, to watch carefully over the infant, Agnes, and to let the first words she uttered be the sacred names of Jesus and Mary. On the morrow, with all her dear ones kneeling round her, and her husband himself reading the prayers for the departing soul, Mary Lescher, in perfect peace, trust, and love, rendered up her soul to God, in her thirty-eighth year.

After his wife's death William Lescher removed to a house at Stratford known as "The Green." His unmarried sister, Caroline, consented to take charge of the household. The three elder children were sent to school: William to Stonyhurst, and Fanny and Annie to Newhall.

The old-fashioned entry in the school register runs as follows: "The two Miss Leschers arrived at Newhall, January 31, 1837. They are to take the common lessons, to learn music and dancing. The elder is to learn drawing with the master. They have both made their first confession. Miss Lescher will be twelve years old next May. Miss A. Lescher is not yet eleven years old."

Of Fanny's life at Newhall we have next to no details. In later years she always spoke most affectionately of her former teachers, and very highly of the solid education they gave to their pupils. One of the few surviving companions of these early days used to say that Fanny was very good and clever, and that she watched over Annie with motherly care. The two children were confirmed on the Feast of St. Raphael, and

on the following Christmas Fanny made her First Communion at Midnight Mass.

The story runs that Fanny sent her father some verses of her own composition for his birthday, and that her somewhat strict parent acknowledged them by the return-gift of some worsted wherewith to mend her stockings! She herself used to relate to her students how she had won a prize for a competitive essay on the subject of Home and School Training. "And, my dears," she added, with that playful humour which was one of her many charms, "the nuns were very fair-minded to give it to me, for I was wholly on the side of home education." In matter of fact the child seems to have been unable to become really acclimatised out of the home atmosphere, and the nuns recognised that she was one of those who should never have left her father's side. Nevertheless she went through her course of studies so brilliantly that at the end of two years she was head of the school, and took the gold medal, the highest distinction awarded. The religious then advised her father that it was useless to leave her longer at school, and in May, 1889, Frances Mary Lescher came home for good. Annie, whose health had given cause for anxiety, left Newhall about the same time, and, later, was sent to continue her education at the English Convent, Bruges.

Sixty years after, when Newhall celebrated its centenary, a history of the Convent was published. One of the Canonesses wrote to Agnes Lescher, then Abbess of Bergholt: "Father Sidney Smith, S.J., told me that if Sister Mary of St. Philip had only been the shortest time in the house we ought to mention it, as it is such an honour to have had anything to do with her."

In February, 1900, Sister Mary of St. Philip wrote in her turn:

"MY DEAR REVEREND MOTHER,

"We have just finished reading in Community your beautiful history of Newhall, and I think the Sisters have enjoyed it *almost* as much as I have done. I was touched by the writer's very kind allusion to my unworthy self in the chapter about the school.

"I want to ask you if you will be so very kind as to let me purchase another copy. The one I have was sent me by kind

Mrs. Acton. I should like also to buy the dear old *General History*, for which I have a lingering tenderness, having known it in its MS. days.

“With every best wish for the future of the dear old place, and kindest regards to yourself, believe me,

“Very sincerely yours in J.C.,

“SISTER MARY OF ST. PHILIP, S.N.D.

“(A *very* old Newhall pupil).”

CHAPTER II

“ THROUGH EYES OF YOUTH ”

“ Behold my heart danceth in the delight of a hundred arts, and the Creator is well pleased.”—KABIR.

THERE now began for Frances Lescher fourteen years of home life, so happy, so useful, so satisfying, that to many they might seem rounded off in completeness. But to us who hold the sequel, they were years of fashioning and preparation, developing first, and then ripening into fullness, the fine gifts that were hers, both of nature and of grace; so that later, when God's call came to break the “linked sweetness long drawn out” of home life and home love, she went forth to her unseen task a woman young of heart, indeed, and fresh of mind as the great are wont to be, but also deep of heart and grave in mind as the great must ever be.

William Lescher, himself, undertook the more serious side of his daughter's education. He knew, none better, the rare promise of her eager mind. She was just at that age when youth looks out upon a world full of interest, of charm, and of novelty; when it is conscious of the existence of ideals, other than personal, which it may accept or reject wholly or in part. Well it was for Frances Lescher that her adolescent mind was trained and cultivated by one whose own character and intellect were so exceptional. In days when it was rare for girls to study Latin, she read Virgil with her father; under his guidance, too, she learned to love intelligently our English classics. Monica tells how she delighted to recite for the younger ones her favourite passages from *Childe Harold* and Shakespeare's plays. But, above all, she revelled in Froissart's *Chronicles* and all that related to the Middle Ages, whose deeds of chivalry won her young enthusiasm, an enthusiasm that never waned, for many a time in after years have her religious Sisters heard her exclaim: “Ah! my

dear, if only I had lived in the thirteenth century !” Sister Mary of St. Philip was of the race that does not lose first loves.

“ Fanny was always very studious and fond of reading,” wrote Monica, “ but with all her talents she was singularly free from self-conceit. Aunt Caroline often remarked this to us, though we took it quite as a matter of course.”

The Pitchford diaries give us a glimpse of the solid, serious books which were read and discussed by the young cousins : Digby’s *Mores Catholici*, Rosmini’s writings, the *Quarterly* and *Dublin Reviews*, and many others. Caroleen records how she and Fanny sat up by the fire far into the night, the one reading the *History of Napoleon*, the other deep in Ward’s *Ideal of a Christian Church*. But there was time, too, for lighter reading ; Scott and Dickens found a place in Fanny’s literary affections, and Edward used to relate that she once sat up all night to read a new book by Dickens. She was already able to enjoy the *Fioretti* and *I Promessi Sposi* in the original, and *Paul et Virginie* was a great favourite. Her French even at this time was fluent and grammatical. Partly to give Fanny an opportunity for French conversation, and still more in the religious interests of the young exile herself, the Lescher household was always ready to welcome a charming young French girl, Pauline de Séneval, who was teaching at a Protestant school near “ The Green.” This was the beginning of a life-long friendship between Fanny and Pauline. Seas might part them, paths in life diverge, but the busy mother and the busy nun still made leisure to write to one another. The last letter in the series bears the date 1904, the year when death stilled the hand of Sister Mary of St. Philip ; she announces to her old friend, now Madame Pingenet, the loss of her youngest sister, Agnes, Abbess of the Benedictines at Bergholt—

“ She was the last of my family left to me. I think I shall soon be joining them now. Pray for me, dear friend, that I may be ready with my lamp lit. I am always your devoted and faithful Fanny (Sister Mary of St. Philip).”

In reply came Pauline’s touching words : “ Do not speak to me of your age. I picture you always as I knew you at the age when I was so happy with you in London. I see myself at Miss Jones’s window waiting for you to take me to chapel. It is the most charming memory I have. Good-bye,

friend of my youth. I am no longer able to walk, but fortunately the memory of the heart does not fail.”

In 1895 this same friend had written her impressions of those early Stratford days for Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid, the daughter of Mr. Sidney Lescher, then, as now, Superior of Notre Dame Training College, Glasgow : “ I can never forget the holiness of that *milieu* in which four nuns and a priest grew up under the care of Miss Caroline Lescher, who herself ended her days in a convent when her nephews and nieces no longer needed her guidance. All my life I shall remember the night prayers said in common, and how, when the servants had gone downstairs, each child came in order of age to kneel at the father’s knee and receive his blessing. Another thing which moved me deeply was the daily prayer addressed to God for the repose of the soul of His servant, Mary, with the long pause following that all might meditate on the virtues of the dear, dead mother. What kindness the Leschers lavished on a lonely girl of eighteen ! Though I held a post in a Protestant school, my convictions were in no danger, thanks to the piety and good example of my friends. Not a year goes by without my reminding my beloved Fanny of my friendship and gratitude ; and the days on which the postman brings her replies are red-letter days for me. In her last letter she tells me that God still leaves her in the midst of her labours although it is high time, she thinks, to put her in some little corner where she may prepare herself for death ; but that she will gladly work for Him so long as He gives her health and strength.”

Fanny’s first letter to Pauline was written on Wednesday in Holy Week. She is anxious that her friend should approach the Sacraments, but, with her incomparable, light touch, she avoids even the appearance of giving good advice—

“ **MADemoiselle,**

“ What ails your Highness that you did not deign to look at me all day yesterday ? Papa is saying that we have quarrelled at last. As for me I did not know what to think, especially when I did not see you at Vespers nor at *the fourteen candles*. You must be ill. Do tell me what is the matter and if you will go and see Mr. Norris to-morrow. If so, I will accompany you at a quarter to nine. Mass will be said at half-past precisely.

"Papa and my brother¹ start on Wednesday at eight o'clock. They will take your letters for Nancy with much pleasure. In fact I think Papa will probably pass through that town."

Sixty years later, Pauline, whose grandchildren now numbered nine, sent this letter to her old friend saying that though she was busy making the sacrifice of many long-treasured letters, she was still guarding those which Fanny had sent to her in far-off happy days. Sister Mary of St. Philip wrote in reply: "The ancient epistle preserved in your archives amused me much. You must burn my letters with the others." Fortunately Madame Pingenet had the discretion to disobey. Letters worth calling letters were out of the question as long as the girls spent every week-end together; but in 1842, Fanny, now seventeen years old, was at Stoke-by-Nayland, staying with her grandmother in a wing of Gifford's Hall, an old Catholic mansion, part of which was then in use as an ecclesiastical seminary. The railway system being as yet undeveloped, the journey was made by sea.

(FRANCES LESCHER TO PAULINE DE SÉNEVAL)

"College of St. Felix, Sept. 5th. 10. 30 p.m.

"Am I not very faithful not to forget my promise of writing to you? Here I am in my little cell, with my paper on my knees in truly Gothic style, for here folk do as our ancestors did in the thirteenth century. . . .

"I had a charming journey. The sea was as calm as a river. At five o'clock we reached Ipswich, where my grandmother was waiting for us with two of my cousins; at half-past eight we found ourselves beneath the Gothic portals of this ancient castle, in which, as I told you, my grandmother has apartments. If you could only see it! Such a delightful place, where one can easily transport oneself into the beautiful days of chivalry. I am never tired of contemplating the old baronial hall, with its magnificent carved oaken ceiling.

"The seminary was opened only three weeks ago and at present there are but three students here, so we have the whole house almost entirely to ourselves."

¹ William, Fanny's eldest brother, was going to school at the Jesuit College at Fribourg.

Annie Lescher and Kate Pitchford were now home from Bruges, and the cousins shared lessons in accomplishments.

“Fanny Lescher spent four hours here to-day for her drawing lesson,” writes Mrs. Pitchford. “Mr. Harrison (the drawing-master) is well pleased with her likeness of dear Caroleen (Pitchford) as a gipsy.”

Twice a week the cousins went to London for lessons at the Royal Academy of Music, where Chatterton taught the harp. He looked upon Miss Lescher as his most promising pupil, but as she would not agree to practise for four hours a day, he refused to teach her. Yet, though formal lessons were discontinued, Fanny still came as companion to Kate Pitchford and sat through her cousin’s lessons; and she was, almost to her last years, an expert performer.

In these early days of the Catholic Revival, Catholics voluntarily put what talent they possessed at the service of religion. Thus Fanny and Annie made themselves responsible for the harmonium in the little church at Stratford on alternate Sundays. Sometimes things went smoothly, but as often as not the wheezy old instrument refused to make a sound. On such occasions, if the Mass were not too advanced, three strides would bring the celebrant from the altar to the choir. A vigorous push and shake and once more the instrument, submitting to this drastic treatment, yielded to the touch of the young accompanists.

There being no Catholic school in the parish the two sisters organised a Catechism Class, which was held in the coach-house at “The Green.” Here the poorer children of the neighbourhood were also taught to read and write; here, too, it may well be, that the consuming love for souls, which was the very breath of Frances Lescher’s life, was first kindled.

The Pitchfords helped in choir and sacristy, but their home at Bromley was three miles distant, and, when meetings were not possible, silence was bridged by letters, written often in that playful, mock-heroic style which Fanny loved to adopt at this time with her girl friends.

(FRANCES LESCHER to CATHERINE PITCHFORD)

“I have been waiting for you to fix the day when the portals of our castle are to be thrown open to our welcome kinswoman. Albeit longing to embrace you both, I must beg

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of you to put off your visit until Uncle and Aunt Witham have been here; they are coming next week with Tanty and all their train, so, of course, the apartments of this our spacious mansion will be occupied from the donjon tower up to the turreted chamber, and, alas! no room, as the major-domo informs me, for the accommodation of our fair cousins. But hope smilingly bids us dry the tears of affection; for by the beginning of the week after next (so saith the major-domo) all things will be ready for your reception—the fatted calf will be killed, the ox roasted whole and the Malvoisin broached—when

“ All our heralds shall ready be
And every minstrel sound his glee
And all our trumpets blow,”

to greet the return of our gentle shepherdesses from the pastoral vales in which they have so long lingered. We are invited to Boyles Court for next Sunday, and the paterfamilias hath signified his intention of going, but I fear me his hapless daughters will have to lament their hard fate at home with Cinderella and the ashes. Howbeit, we will try what can be done, and, if by happy chance the Master waxeth agreeable, we will meet beneath the hospitable roof of our sylvan uncle.

“ Have you seen the *Dublin Review*? It is delicious and full of interesting articles.”

Dinner parties and dances were usually family gatherings, for Leschers, Pitchfords, and Hoys had an innumerable host of cousins, some of them doubly knit together by intermarriage. It will be remembered that Fanny's aunt, Martha, the handsomest of the Hoy girls, had married her father's cousin and partner, Joseph Lescher of Boyles Court. The other aunt, mentioned in the last letter, was Jane, Lady Witham, whose shrewd and kindly advice was always highly valued. Her little girl, Constantia, or Tanty, as she was called, was much loved both by Fanny and Annie.

William Lescher's youngest sister Harriet had married Patrick Grehan of Worth Hall. Her stepson, Patrick Grehan, married Fanny Pitchford in 1842, and the young couple made their home at “ The Furze ” at Southweald in Essex, near Boyles Court. In this same year, Fanny Lescher made her

social début at the wedding of another cousin, Eleanor Walmesley, who married Lord Petre's second son.

“When Fanny was seventeen,” records Monica, “she went to her first ball, and I remember very well being taken up to see her dress. But no one ever cared so little about dress as she did; she never seemed to mind in the least what she wore, but took anything my Aunt Caroline provided for her. Yet she gave herself up with her usual energy to whatever amusement came in her way. When Annie came home from school the two sisters thoroughly enjoyed the parties to which they were invited, and they talked and wrote of them with great zest.”

The following letter to her friend and cousin, young Mrs. Grehan, was written some time in 1848:

“I have had divers remorseful visitings since the reception of your note touching my neglectful conduct. But really it were idle to recount the many efforts I have made to struggle through a sheet of paper. Once I had got half-way through at Mrs. Witham's ball—during a game of chess with Josephine—when checkmate arrested my progress, and I was called to devise some new amusement. I never knew any one require so much amusement as she does; and in our house, you know, it is a terrible, dull thing not to be addicted to reading. I fear she had a dull time of it, though we did our best to create a little out-door excitement in the way of bows and arrows and the cherry tree. Mrs. Witham's was a very pleasant ball. The only novelty was the Polka, which afforded infinite entertainment to the uninitiated standers-by. The Walmesleys, Withams, and Hercys had all learnt and practised it together, so they were the chief performers, together with a Mr. Langdale, a cousin of the Withams—a highly elegant young man just fresh from Paris, whose terpsichorean talent had already ravished Versailles. He condescended to dance with me, and, compassionating my ignorance, he enlightened me on the different merits of the three most famous Polka professors in Paris, besides giving me an historical account of the origin and rise of the dance, which, like all great events destined to exercise a mighty influence on the minds of men, sprang up by some obscure chance.

“But why am I wasting all this sweetness on the desert

air of Weald? Alas! it is possible that there are minds unrefined enough to prefer a dissertation on the state of the crops to all the romances of all the Polkas; and there may be those who can discover more grace in a baby's topsy-turvy than in Mr. Langdale's immortal heel-step. I had one of these vulgar minds for a partner in one of the Mr. Blounts, who did not attempt any Polka flights, but amused me a good deal with stories of F. M., whom he knew very well, and with whom he spent some days last year."

One is continually impressed by the strong Catholic note running through the domestic records in letters and diaries; the constantly recurring: "Had the happiness of Confession and Communion"; the invariable *requiescat in pace* after the mention of a death in the circle of friends or acquaintances; the interest in Church services, and the faithful substitution of "Vespers at home," "Prayers at home," when they cannot be had at the Church. One realises that even the pleasures of this world are made sweeter to those who seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice.

Both Fanny and young Mrs. Grehan had deep reverence and esteem for Daniel O'Connell. The proudest page in Fanny Grehan's album was that on which the *Liberator* had inscribed his appreciation of Miss Agnew's novel, *Geraldine*. Mrs. Grehan's first son was born just at the time of the great blow struck at the Repeal agitation when the monster meeting at Clontarf was proclaimed. A little later Fanny Lescher writes to her that O'Connell himself is in gaol.

When in the following year O'Connell came to London to protest against the political trials, Mr. Lescher took his eldest daughter to hear him speak at the Anti-Corn Law League. A few days later a dinner was given to the great man in Covent Garden theatre. Caroleen Pitchford notes the event in her diary:

"Mamma, Catherine, Cousin Caroline, Fanny (Lescher), Annie, and myself were in the dress circle. We had capital places and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. There were glee-singers, and a fine band playing Irish airs. When that dear holy man's health was proposed by the Chairman there was tremendous enthusiasm. I shall never forget the cheering—the gentlemen hurrahing, and the ladies waving handkerchiefs till it was like a snowstorm. O'Connell's speech was beautiful,

in some parts quite affecting. He is looking, I think, rather careworn. Cousin William (Lescher) had the honour of being introduced, and shaking hands with him. It was a delightful evening. Long life to blessed Daniel O’Connell, ‘the convicted conspirator,’ as he calls himself.”

Another event which had its influence on Frances Lescher’s girlhood was the publication in 1841 of Pugin’s *First Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture*. The Pitchford boys were now at school at Prior Park, where one of the professors, the Rev. Mr. Baines, was a keen supporter of the Gothic Revival. The movement, it will be remembered, produced much controversy, one of the most emphatic of the Anti-Goths being a certain Rev. Jacob Illingworth. About this time Fanny writes playfully to her cousin, Kate Pitchford—

“Nottingham,
“The Hostelrye of Sainte George,
Vigil of ye Conception.

“Faithful to my promise, I sit me down to redeem it, albeit my feelings and sentiments are not quite so romantic as I could have wished, or as you perhaps expect from these prolific regions. However, as I shall finish this epistle in the good town of Birmingham, it is to be hoped that I shall then soar above all the grovelling considerations of stockings and lace and be rather more entitled to Mrs. P——’s promise of a strait-waistcoat. To-day I have spent chiefly walking about the town and visiting one of the principal lace manufactories, consequently I have had little time for antiquity and the Middle Ages, a passing but enraptured glimpse of St. Barnabas—a walk to the Castle beneath a Gothic gateway ornamented, by the way, with a red chimney-top—and a peep into Mortimer’s hole so ‘famed in story’ have been the extent of my antiquarian researches. But yesterday afternoon was more congenial. Our first walk was, of course, to the new Church, which verily might inspire ‘that dry chip,’ Illingworth, with flights of ecstasy and dreams of chivalry. There is a solemnity and religious light about the interior of the Church, unfinished as it is, which is perfectly awe-inspiring and makes you forget the ‘world and all its pomps’ from the moment you enter it—it is really the house of God and there is no mistaking it for either drawing-room, theatre or Methodist conventicle.

But I certainly did wish for Father Tom ¹ in order to give vent to the triumph I felt over him and his paltry cause, which he defends with so much logic. We have been several times to the old Catholic Chapel and called on the clergymen—Messrs. Cheadle and Mulligan—the former is really a very nice man, and we spent a pleasant half-hour in his room—they are both as merry as Friar Tuck, very *Oscotian*, and very proud of their new Church; and its architect, Dr. Walsh, usually resides with them, as he prefers the Grecian glare of their modern house to the dim religious light of the episcopal presbytere. His debts, whatever they may be, do not seem to affect his spirits much, for they say he laughs them out of countenance.”

“*Birmingham, Friday Evening.*”

“We have just arrived, and I scribble away at a railroad speed as I remember there will be no London post to-morrow, and I dread the vengeance of Illingworth offended. We have had a glorious day, bright as April, and a most delightful journey. At twelve o'clock we reached Derby, and eftsoons directed our impatient steps towards St. Marie's—Pugin's Church, you know. We speedily came in sight of its lofty pinnacled tower, and stood for some moments entranced by its surpassing beauty. It is very strange, but, notwithstanding all my efforts to judge impartially, I like Pugin better and better at every church I see. I believe he himself thinks little of his Derby Church—it is too much decorated and in too late a style to be thoroughly *Puginic*, but it is, nathless, decidedly the ‘*prettiest*’ I have yet seen. The tower is very much ornamented with pinnacles and battlements, niches, statues, bosses, and gurgets. It has a magnificent perpendicular window and such an entrance! It baffles description, and I leave to the imagination of the poetical all the beauties of the carving, the corbels of angels holding shields, the inscriptions, the entwined initials, etc., etc. We approached the Gothic door of Mr. Sing's house (all gable ends and crosses) and rang an ancient sounding bell, which was answered by a fair portress, who informed us that the Rev. Gentlemen were not at home, but we might see the Church, so we entered by a postern door,

¹ Rev. Thomas Pitchford, Kate's uncle, who was strongly opposed to Gothic.

and oh! what visions burst upon us! I wish you could have seen it, for it really is perfect in its kind, and the ‘choice spirits’ of all the Greeks at Prior Park might do homage to its splendour. I have no time for a minute description of its many exquisite details, but, when we meet, you shall have a full account of the Chancel all a blaze of glory with diapering and stained glass, of the pulpit which it is maddening only to think of, of the octagonal font with its lofty oaken canopy, of the scrolls, the inscriptions, the rood, the statue of Our Lady, the Sedilia and Sacrarium, etc. It was an immense treat, and I shall not quickly forget it. And I must tell you one thing which may disabuse you of the vulgar error that Pugin likes nothing but gloom and murky darkness—the Church of St. Marie’s is *too light*, there is too much glass, which, though it may suit very well gouty old gentlemen and spectacled ladies, is not sufficiently devotional to suit me. I have not yet been to St. Chad’s, but we are going presently in hopes of Compline.

“Fare thee well—but no, I must add a few more lines to tell you we have been out, not to see St. Chad’s, but—to the presbytère. There was nothing going on at the Cathedral but Confession, so we went and asked what time Mass would be to-morrow. One of the priests (Mr. Ivers) was just going out; he saw us and begged us to walk in. He introduced us to the Rev. Mr. Moore, who took us all over the house, and I never was more delighted with anything in my life. In fact I have no words to express my raptures. Oh, that Fr. Tom! if ever I forgive him all he had said against the most beautiful of presbyteries, the most venerable of episcopal palaces, the most exquisite of buildings! Dark! it cannot be dark! Mr. Moore said the common dining-hall is the only part that is gloomy, and that it was darkened on purpose. The good priests of St. Chad’s are not so particular about having a good light to eat their meals by as our friends the Baineses and Illingworths of Prior Park.

“We took tea with Mr. Moore in the presbytère. I am going again to-morrow to spend an hour or two with his sister, Miss Moore, who has apartments in the presbytère and who is very ‘Gothic.’ All the rooms have a label or inscription indicative of their uses. There is ‘Ye Bishop’s Room,’ ‘Ye Curate’s Room’ and ‘Ye Buttery.’ Is it not delightful?”

The same enthusiastic note is struck in a later letter addressed to the fully sympathetic Fanny Grehan—

“*Stratford,
Feast of St. Matthias.*”

“ . . . We met the damsels, your fair sisters, at chapel this morning, and they begged me to procure the enclosed for you and send it, as the rain prevented their visiting Mrs. Vaudrant in person.

“ On Wednesday we spent a very pleasant evening at Bromley—a *soirée philosophique* for Papa and Mr. Huthwaite, who perversely talked of malt and hops the whole evening. The climax was a hot supper, glorious in roast chickens and spring tart. Except this little outburst of gaiety we have been quite in Septuagesima trim since you left, and are sobering down very properly and gradually for sackcloth and ashes next Wednesday.

“ Oh, Fanny, how I wish you could have been with me last week exploring the glories of the exquisite Temple Church ! What inspirations and aspirations might we not have had together, surveying all that now remains of the ‘boast of heraldry and pomp of power’ of the warrior churchmen of the Temple.

“ Even Mr. Taylor was moved into sundry chivalrous deeds by the contemplation of the stern effigies beneath which lie the crumbling bones of those lion-hearted Crusaders, and he did verily encounter divers imminent perils of colds and sore-throats thro’ dark passages and damp recesses, and moreover valiantly endured various wounds and bruises to squeeze his portly form beside the tomb of a venerable Bishop, whose recumbent statue I was devoutly kissing. We were delightfully carried back into the days of chivalry, and Mr. Wackerborth¹ most pleasantly strengthened the illusion in his *blue* shirt, Gothic cloak and flowing locks—for he might well have been imagined some wayworn pilgrim come to recite orisons and requiems over the tombs of those whose redoubted war-cry he had oft heard resounding thro’ the rocky passes and sandy deserts of the East.

“ You could really be delighted with the Church, for it is a little gem of Gothic beauty, and restored with all the taste

¹ A neighbour of the Leschers at Upton; his son became one of the first Oxford converts.

and Catholic feeling which characterised the Ages of Faith. All the goodly and ancient Latin mottoes have been replaced—even the verses of the *Te Deum* under each of the windows in beautiful Old English characters. The stained glass is most gorgeous, and the tessellated pavement so pretty with its heraldic devices of knights, shields, lambs. Altogether it is a most refreshing sight for the lovers of ancient lore, and is enough to infuse chivalry into the soul of Mr. John Wright himself; do recommend it to him as a little dose of the Middle Ages to be taken with a mixture of Pugin’s contrasts three times a week till cured.

“I had a charming letter from Mr. Shattock, albeit somewhat severe, so I have sent him in revenge a long account of the glories of the Temple. . . .

“Your devotedly attached

“FRANCES.”

Archæological expeditions such as this were one of Fanny’s great delights, and she and her sister Annie became expert at rubbing brasses and sketching monuments. It was probably in these Stratford days that they paid a memorable visit to Oxford, where they collected numerous souvenirs. One day when they had been treasure-hunting they went out in a boat rowed by a small boy who ran them aground. Their anxiety for the safety of their collection so impressed the youth that he called out to a man who was coming to their rescue: “Never mind the ladies; save the wallyables.”

CHAPTER III

TRAVELS AND PILGRIMAGES

"All earthly beauty hath one cause and proof,
To lead the pilgrim soul to beauty above."—R. BRIDGES.

IN 1844, Mr. Lescher took his two eldest daughters on a visit to Fribourg, where their brother Willie was being educated at the famous Jesuit College. Fanny seems to have already visited Belgium—she had an aunt living at Bruges—but this was her first tour of any extent. Fortunately for us she kept a detailed journal which has been preserved—a little overbesprinkled with quotations and architectural criticisms, perhaps, but wonderfully intelligent and of most sane appreciations for a girl of nineteen, typical in its piety and Catholic enthusiasms and giving many an amusing side-light on "Papa." It lies before us now, close-written in a firm, clear hand, not very different from the characteristic hand of her womanhood, and with hardly an erasure throughout. The first pencil copy has been carefully gone over since in ink.

"On the 19th of May at about 11 a.m. we left home in quest of adventures 'in furrin parts,' " it opens. The first adventure was an extremely stormy crossing.

"Ever and anon our bewildered feelings were aggravated by the screaming of the children, and the divers reports which reached us touching the effects of the storm in other parts of the boat—how by one gust the gentlemen were tossed out of their berths and were all rolling about the floor like ninepins—how a table had broken in two with a tremendous crash—how an avalanche of luggage had fallen down upon some unwary heads—how a gentleman who had come from India declared he never saw the like before, while a lady in our cabin assured us that she had been five times round the Cape and never was so miserable in her life but once." Nevertheless, on their arrival at Antwerp on the morrow, they go straight

to the Cathedral for Benediction, and Fanny notes with delight the newly completed stalls in the choir, the carvings "exquisitely done in the severe Christian style."

"May 21st.—Papa was wandering about the Hotel like a perturbed spirit at six o'clock this morning—consequently we were not permitted to enjoy our peaceful slumbers long afterwards. We got to the Cathedral at half-past seven and found High Mass going on. The well-remembered organ was sounding forth its 'pealing anthem' and many of the devout female sex at Antwerp were kneeling in their hooded cloaks at the different altars. Oh! what a happiness to be in a Catholic land once more, and what a blessing that we do not kneel (as Mr. Faber says) 'aliens' in faith as well as in country 'before such shrines as these.' We returned to breakfast in the café, and settled to take the ten o'clock train to Aix-la-Chapelle. For the edification of all who delight in punctuality I am happy to state that our trunks were completed even unto the last strap long before Papa arrived with his decisive knock and his merciless 'Girls, I won't wait a moment longer!'"

The run from Liège to Aix delights her—

"We went close by Chaude Fontaine, and the train, with a delightful regard to the picturesque, stopped in one of the prettiest parts of this exquisite little watering-place. We were completely charmed with it and made many projects for spending a week at the Hôtel des Bains, taking a cottage in the glen, or building a hermitage beside the Vesdre in some secular future. We reached the prettily situated town of Verviers at half-past three; here the train stopped for half an hour to give the passengers an opportunity of getting refreshments at the restaurateur's, where, as our guard assured us, there was *poulet, jambon, enfin tout-ce qu'on pourrait désirer.*—*Vide* Papa's Journal for an eloquent description of the pies and beer of Verviers, with which Annie and I made but slight acquaintance."

At Aix, she is horrified by the mixed styles of architecture in the Dom, by "the German designers whose flying angels and cherubs on tiptoe among the clouds are in the very worst style of the classic Renaissance," and by the "unfeeling moderns" who have italianised the "heavy Byzantine columns that might remind the despairing antiquary of Carolo Magno."

And again—

“We visited this morning the churches of St. Paul and the Jesuits. Both have great capabilities—early English columns and high vaulted roofs—but they are both ruined by the Renaissance. These uncivilised Aachenites would spoil York Minster if they had it; no doubt they would think a bulbous spire *à la Chinoise* a wonderful improvement.”

They go into some little church for Benediction—

“It was crowded with people, and they were singing the Litany of Loretto, to which the whole congregation responded. The *Ora pro nobis*, sung with evident devotion by so many voices, had a very fine effect; but nothing short of the great delight these simple-hearted Germans took in it could reconcile us to the awful noise they made in the *Tantum ergo* and *Regina Cœli*. Our roaring Lion¹ is nothing to some of their voices.”

In a fever of enthusiasm to see Cologne she is disgusted with the long stops at the stations and the Germans who “sit down and smoke their meerschaums with the most perfect nonchalance, as if they hadn’t the least suspicion of a Cathedral within thirty miles, or of passengers dying to dash through waggons and charrs-à-banc to get to it.”

When they reach the beautiful city her raptures know no bounds.

“Cologne, May 28rd.—Here we are really and indubitably at Köln—we have feasted our eyes on Father Rhine and seen Drachenfels in the distance. . . . And we have been to the Dom, seen the Cathedral, stood beneath its giant tower, and looked up to the forest of bristling pinnacles that crowns the glorious choir. It is really magnificent, of such unearthly splendour as ‘hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive’; and although the prints and descriptions give one a tolerable idea of the pinnacled choir, nothing could have prepared us for the stupendous tower which yet has only reached one half of its intended dimensions. And there, amidst the moss and weeds that grow upon the unfinished buttresses, stands the antique crane untouched since mediæval hands hauled up the stones and mortar. There stands the half-raised tower, as Hood says, ‘like a broken promise made to God,’ and a judgment seems to have come over it, and a

¹ In the Stratford Choir.

blight upon the ardour of those Catholic times when men gloried to work for the house of God.

"In the shrine of the Three Kings the sacristan consecrated our rings by placing them on each of the three heads of Gaspar, Melchior and Baltasar, whose names are written in rubies on the *châsse*."

Music is always appreciatively noted—

"High Mass. The organ was beautiful, but was played, in a somewhat flourishing style, and the cadences and runs contrasted rather strangely with the plain slow chaunt of the canons."

To the Jesuits' Church in Cologne she metes severe criticism: "A Gothic building from which they have taken great pains to erase all marks of a Christian edifice, and have converted it into the most elaborate and outrageously decorated Italian temple that Goth or Greek ever set eyes upon. The interior is literally taste run mad, but as it is all *ad majorem Dei gloriam* we must forgive the absurd decorations in the devotion which dictated them."

The cemetery outside Cologne she finds:

"—something in the style of Highgate, but the monuments are in better taste and almost all have parterres before them, or creepers twining around them, or garlands hung upon them, showing that the dead are not forgotten by the living. The simple crosses which mark the poorer graves are of a triangular shape, like those Pugin has drawn around some of his churches, and they have a very pretty effect amidst the more pompous memorials of the great. At one of these lowly emblems our commissioner went to pray with his head uncovered, and when we asked him whose it was, he replied, *C'est ma mère*. In the evening we walked up for a last look at the Cathedral, and bade farewell to the 'St. Peter's of the North,' the most splendid effort of Catholic art, and the brightest vision of Gothic beauty in the world."

The scenery along the Rhine sent the two girls into ecstasies, doubled by their extensive acquaintance with history, poetry and legend.

"The grandeur and beauty of the whole is perfectly inconceivable. As for us, we could hardly contain our raptures and ran to catch views from one end of the boat to the other, much to the amusement of the phlegmatic Germans who sat

smoking under the awning, totally unconscious of anything but their Rudesheimer and their meerschaums."

And again, as they steamed past Rheinfels—

"Oh, how we sighed to stop and explore—to climb up the crag and examine the fortress or to sit in a nook under the shelving rock and satiate ourselves with the glorious view! Alas, the Dampschiff paid little regard to our lamentations; it did not stop five minutes, and splash went the paddle-wheels again."

The castle of Marksburg on the top of a rock carries her imagination back to her beloved Middle Ages—

"It is so completely mediæval in its aspect that you almost expect to see one of its ferocious lords dashing down the rock with a train of vassals in clanking armour, and pouncing upon the trembling passengers for their tribute, which was usually exacted *au point de l'épée*."

And, adverting to its present use as a State prison—

"One could almost wish to be a Russian *traverson*, with such a Kilmainham as *that* for confinement."

Every Saint's history or legend, the delight of her Catholic heart, is given in full—that of St. Ursula, for instance; while any little traveller's adventure or *contretemps* is sure to be brought into humorous relief.

Mayence was reached long after sundown, and there was considerable confusion at the landing stage, and on deck a general rush of passengers to find their boxes.

"Now it must be confessed that the moon, albeit wonderfully pleasant to talk poetry by, is decidedly inconvenient to recognise one's luggage by, wherefore there was a most unpoetical scramble for portmanteaus and carpet-bags. Happy he was who had but one trunk! happier still he who had a courier! but yet more felicitous was one Englishman who knew how to take the matter coolly; he came and talked to me about German theatres and had hummed half-way through an opera before Papa had finished fighting for our goods and chattels. There was another combat to be held with the porters on shore; at length by dint of a few *Ja, Jas*, and a good many *Nein, Neins*, we got them to put our boxes on the truck for the Rheinischer Hof. They chose to go at a running pace, so we had to gallop after them the whole way. We were not sorry when they stopped at the hotel and our perils ended with a comfortable night's rest beneath the crimson

silk duvets which are indispensable adjuncts to the romance of a German bed."

Again, on the way to Mannheim—

"Papa got very friendly with an old lady on board going to Heidelberg, and Annie and I were obliged to keep a sharp look-out for fear he should in a fit of absence forget that he was travelling with two daughters, and walk off to the railway station with the said dame. Fortunately he remembered us at the landing place at Mannheim."

At Mainz Fanny and Annie "valiantly resolved to get up at five in order to 'perambulate the Cathedral.' We heard Mass in one of the side chapels, and then finished our examination of the church. It is a most imposing edifice, the early Byzantine part having been built in the time of Charlemagne. The massive pillars and semi-circular arches of the Centre Tower carry you back to the ninth century, but the aisles and cloisters all belong to the thirteenth. This Cathedral is remarkable for possessing two choirs and high altars. We walked round the beautiful cloisters. . . . There is an exquisite Gothic doorway leading from the cloister to the transept, and an equally perfect Norman arch at the end of one of the aisles which contains the only example of our Norman zigzag ornament I have yet met with on the Continent. The monuments of the princely and powerful Archbishops of Mayence . . . seem highly interesting, from the various periods at which they were erected, and the alternate rise and fall of the art which they exhibit."

At Heidelberg she tells us—

"After the *Salut* we waited in the church until the next Mass, which, *greatly to our disappointment, was a Low one.*"

Having visited the castle—

"We walked back to our inn down a most precipitous street which contained the most picturesque and antique-looking houses that our antiquarian researches have yet discovered. They were really lovely, but, while we were admiring them, a shower of rain came on, and regard for our bonnets speedily put an end to our visions, and prompted us to make the best of our way to the Hôtel d'Hollande. Alas, the evening turned out wet; it cleared up, however, for a little while, and we gave Papa sundry hints touching the beauty of the views, the pleasantness of walking after rain, the freshness of the trees,

etc.; but he was deaf to all our demonstrations, and we never walked by the Neckar again."

At Rostadt they settled to leave the railroad and drive to Strasburg with a Russian lady and gentleman, most agreeable travelling companions—

"At eleven o'clock we were all seated in a lumbering German *calèche*, with two exceedingly matter-of-fact horses who did not seem much disposed to make good their driver's assurance that we should be at Strasburg in six hours. Notwithstanding our lively Russians we got very tired of the creeping *calèche*, and eagerly watched for the first appearance of the lofty spire of the Cathedral. It rose from the plain alone and seemingly unsurrounded by any object, and it was not till we drew near to Kehl that we could discern the town of Strasburg, with its streets and avenues, crouching as it were in all humility at the foot of the proud and towering spire. All Gothic contemplations, however, were speedily dispelled by the sight of the *douane*, and the armed soldiery who ordered us out of the carriage at the point of the bayonet and, from the moment of their discovering thirty pairs of stockings in Mme. Alexandre's boxes, seemed to regard us in no other light than as condemned criminals. We were kept nearly an hour at this wearying place, and the bayonets released us just as Annie and I were commencing night prayers in despair."

The exterior of the Cathedral a little disappoints her, but this feeling "completely vanished when the door was thrown open and we stood in the nave. The lofty pillars running up to the vaulted roof in unbroken height; the splendid carving of capitals and bosses, mullions and canopies; but, above all, the unequalled stained-glass windows through which the light streams in coloured radiance upon pillar and arch, give to the whole an inconceivable effect of gorgeousness, and combine the grandeur of York Minster with the devotion of St. Chad's."

Then, quick to edification as she is to amusement, she records how, at a Mass heard in a side-chapel at the Altar of the *Mois de Marie*:

"We were much edified with the piety of the attendants. During Mass they recited aloud the Rosary, and towards the end the Litany of Loretto was sung, almost *balbutié*, by the little choir children, the most innocent, infantine voices I ever heard."

At Basle the enthusiastic sisters “go to bed with delightful visions of precipices, mountains and Swiss châteaux, and with all the anticipations of perils and adventures in the romantic regions we are to explore.”

In those days the railway system in Switzerland was still mercifully incomplete, and the fortunate travellers made much of the journey by carriage, with plenty of stoppages, and a good deal of discursive walking. The first view of the Alps from the top of the Jura Mountains, “with the Lake of Bienné spread out like a mirror beneath us,” impressed itself indelibly on Fanny’s memory. When the boundary between the cantons of Berne and Fribourg is passed she joyfully notes—

“The Catholicity of the latter is at once strikingly exhibited in the numerous crosses, the chapels, chantries, and pious images that greeted us as we passed along. After a drive of more than three hours we made a sudden turn round the foot of a steep rock and came directly in view of Fribourg. The *Pensionnat* and Jesuits’ House stood on the hill before us, and looked down into a deep ravine at the foot of which ran the winding river Saane. . . . We have been to the *Pensionnat*, and were smilingly received by the porter, who informed Willie¹ of our arrival, and in a few minutes the dear boy came rushing down the corridors to welcome us. He was in such spirits at seeing us, and looking so well—scarcely changed since he left us two years ago—with very little of the German student about his appearance, and not quite so romantic as we expected to find him. The rector came in to us presently—a mild, venerable-looking man, all sweetness and *politesse*; he gave Willie leave to come out with us till eight o’clock.”

“*Sunday, June 2nd.*—Went to Mass in the Cathedral church, and had the greatest of treats in hearing the celebrated organ. It is a wonderful instrument and was magnificently played; the imitation of trumpets was so exact that we could hardly believe there was not a full brass band in the church. It is said that the organist imitates human voices in the most extraordinary manner, but we did not hear him at his proper exhibition time.”

“Willie could not leave the college to-day, so we went up to him, and were taken all over the establishment by Father

¹ Willie Lescher, her eldest brother.

Kenny. We saw the music- and drawing-rooms, which are beautifully arranged; the study-places, refectories, dormitories and chapel all on a scale of magnitude proportioned to the number of pupils. All the rooms are fitted up in the simplest style, and there is nothing to see beyond the arrangements. The *Pensionnat* of Fribourg lacks the magnificence of Stonyhurst College; it has no splendid picture-gallery, no interesting library rich in relics of the olden times, and no Gothic church worthy of the establishment. This last, in fact, is a great desideratum, and they talk of building one as soon as they are rich enough. The college, with the *Lycée* and the adjoining convent, are all beautifully situated and command a most superb prospect.

"Monday, June 3rd.—Walked up to the *Pensionnat* directly after Mass and brought Willie back to breakfast. We then constituted him our guide and made him show us the 'lions' of the town. We wandered up and down this 'humpbacked city' till at last Papa declared he would not stir a step further uphill, and poor Willie was at his wits' end to find a smooth walk. . . . After dinner we proposed exploring the Gotteron, but Papa declined the ascents. We three set out alone and had a most delicious ramble through the ravine, following the course of the stream and, with Willie's chivalrous aid, bravely ascending the mountain path which led to the summit. We had a lovely view from the top of the rocks, and we sat down to rest and enjoy it, refreshing ourselves meanwhile with Alpine strawberries gathered on the mountain. . . . In the evening we had a more sober and penitential walk to the *Pensionnat* to confession to Father Kenny. While we were in the church all the novices and seminarists came in to say *Angelus*. Annie and I retreated in unspeakable awe to the remotest corner, but not until they had had a glimpse of our profane bonnets, and no doubt there was a nice purification and exorcisation of the benches before they entered them again."

Next day they are off to Lausanne, taking the boy with them.

"Willie's company was certainly an improvement on the hat-box and carpet-bag which had hitherto occupied the fourth place in the *calèche*, and then he is so *au fait* of the road and could give us so much information touching the *châteaux*

and *campagnes* and all the celebrated characters in and about Fribourg."

Lausanne they find "very different from dear Catholic Fribourg. We are now in a 'land of closed churches and hushed bells, of unlighted altars and unstolen priests'; no more crosses by the wayside, no 'knee-worn cells' in the rocks, and if we want to visit a church, *il faut*, as runs an announcement put forth at Moudun, *s'appliquer à la gendarmerie*. The Cathedral of Lausanne, however, is well worth such an application; the interior is by far the most beautiful I have yet seen in Switzerland"—and she proceeds to describe appreciatively the graceful effect in porch and nave of "the light, detached columns clustering about the tall round one which runs up to the roof, and loses itself in the vaulting of the arches."

"We rambled along the lake and seated ourselves on a parapet under the trees and close to the waters, which danced and rippled at our feet. We had a thoroughly lazy hour; Willie clambering about the rocks and frightening the fishes, Papa playing ducks and drakes in the lake, Annie and I sentimentalising in the shade. We did penance afterwards for our idleness, for we had to walk back to Lausanne under the blazing meridian sun, and we entered the 'Hôtel Gibbon' half defunct."

The little village of St. Maurice presented quite a martial appearance. "The inn where we dined was full of officers wearing the Cross of the *Confédération Suisse*, and looking for all the world like so many Crusaders. . . . The Colonel was a most agreeable and entertaining man, six foot high, with a sabre cut across his cheek-bone. He explained to us the circumstances of the rebellion and the battle of Trient with all the gusto of a soldier; he sent his aide-de-camp for a drawing he had made of the field, and gave us a minute account of the whole affair with many interesting anecdotes, relating to the heroes of both sides. When his friend went out he told us who he was, adding, *qu'il craignait bien pour lui, qu'il avait un trop bon cœur et qu'il voulait tout accommoder par la douceur*. It was most exciting to hear him talk of the events of the battle at which *malheureusement* he arrived with his troops only in time to be a spectator of the victory, and we were quite sorry when the *voiture* was ready. . . . About

a league before reaching Martigny we came upon the scene of the fight of the 20th of May, and we easily recognised the position from the sketch we saw at St. Maurice. We saw the stains of blood upon the ground and the bullet marks in the bridge over the Trient, and we almost forgot the *croisé*d colonel's vivid description of the engagement in the horrors of civil war which has divided cantons and broken asunder the ties of kindred in the once peaceful regions of the Valais."

Saturday, June 8th.—The heading is *Grand St. Bernard*, twice underlined, and Fanny's joy palpitates beneath the written lines. "Here we are at the Great St. Bernard—even at the far-famed hospice eight thousand feet above the sea, and shivering with cold on the 8th of June. . . . We left Martigny this morning in two picturesque Swiss chars-à-banc drawn by mules which took us about three leagues up the pass as far as Orsières. The scenery was very grand, one road being at the foot of a deep valley along the course of the noisy, hurrying river Drance." At Orsières they mounted their mules. "We flatter ourselves that our appearance bordered on the picturesque, and many were the aspirations that we might be beheld from Stratford, and that Aunt Caroline could see with her own eyes some of the perils we went through, which we fear may very possibly be regarded as travellers' tales, and taken *cum grano salis* through the matter-of-fact medium of a journal. We enjoyed the mules beyond everything—enjoyed laughing at each other—and, beyond all, enjoyed walking on the edges of terrific precipices and seeing the animals pick their cautious way over loose stones and broken rocks sufficient to break the legs of any horse."

There were a few adventures during the ascent. "Here we first came upon the snow and here the scenery assumed that grand and awe-inspiring character which one expects to meet with on ascending the Alps. We were lost in a whirl of wonder and excitement, when suddenly our guides came rushing up to us, calling to the mules and seizing the bridles. We found we were on a bed of snow, which the heat of the last few days was rapidly melting, and the poor animals sank to their knees at every step. With some labour the guides dragged us through two of these beds; but just as we were congratulating ourselves on reaching *terra firma* again, we turned and beheld Papa and his mule floundering about in

the snow, and one of the men endeavouring in vain to effect an extrication. There was something so absurd in the predicament that we could hardly help laughing, albeit somewhat alarmed for Papa's safety; he, however, soon contrived to jump off his mule and joined us at the *Maison de Refuge* and house for the dead, where we were waiting for him. At this last catastrophe the guides shook their heads, and a consultation was held in which it was decided that we must walk the rest of the way, and the mules must be sent back to La Cantine to await our arrival the next morning. They said it was about an hour and a half's walk to the hospice, but it turned out to be nearer two hours and a half, with perils and adventures, which, we have some pride in saying, do not fall to the lot of every common summer tourist. We immediately commenced crossing the deep snow-drifts and avalanches which filled up the ravines, and served as bridges across the rivers and mountain torrents; and it may be imagined that it was no very pleasant sight for Cisalpine nerves to behold the water dashing with tremendous force from underneath the snow on which we walked, and from which we were only separated by an arch of ice that in a few weeks will have melted and disappeared. We were sunk to our ankles every moment, and felt very happy when a friendly rock prevented our going further; indeed we soon learned to think nothing of this, for it was not till we ascended the mountain on which the hospice stands that our great difficulties began. Here there was literally nothing solid to stand upon; we floated by our petticoats in the snow, and it was often a hard pull for the guides to effect our rescue. At last we heard a shout from Willie, who had gone on before us—the hospice was in sight, and a few more struggles would bring us to its door. We fought on with a desperate effort, and twenty minutes later we stood upon the steps. Here we saw several of the monks busily employed in clearing the snow. One of the great dogs was the first to give us welcome, and then came a lay-brother who conducted us to our rooms. Such rooms, too! all romance—from the window-shutters containing the names of all who had slept within its holy precincts to the quaint *pie-dish* in which we washed our hands, and the harmless looking-glass in which we vainly attempted to twist a ringlet. After renovating our habiliments we descended to the salon, where a crackling fire made a most comfortable

blaze, and where one of the Fathers presently appeared to receive us. Supper had been most hospitably prepared, and he sat with us during the evening, interesting us a great deal with his account of their mode of life and their adventurous excursions among the eternal snows which surround them. There are about twelve of the brethren at the St. Bernard Monastery, who are renewed and changed from their headquarters—the convent at Martigny. They have likewise an establishment on the Simplon, but all the brothers there make their noviceship at Mt. S. Bernard. They are mostly young monks up here, and seldom, I believe, live to be old in this severe climate, though our friend told us they all enjoyed pretty good health. They are superior-looking men and, romance apart, really appear what they are—heroes in the cause of benevolence and humanity. The Monastery of St. Bernard is one of those places which cannot be exaggerated by poetical descriptions; here there is no bringing down, no falling off from the sublime and simple Truth.

“ We went early to our cells, got to bed as fast as possible, and never felt mattress and pillow so comfortable in all our lives.

“ *Sunday, June 9th.*—We were sleepy enough this morning at half-past five and did not feel much inclined to turn out into the cold, with the prospect of a second edition of last night’s adventures before our eyes. But we were to hear Mass at half-past six, so there was no alternative, and we hurried down shivering into the church. This is a spacious building of no particular style of architecture, but with something notwithstanding, very monastic about it. The decorations are in the taste of the country. After Mass, the Father who entertained us yesterday evening came to the salon and took breakfast with us. We afterwards went to look a little at the hospice, to inspect the outside, and to visit the dogs. The dogs are splendid creatures; they live in and walk about the monastery like the rest of its inhabitants; they have something of a haughty demeanour and scarcely condescended to let us stroke them. Their chief use, the Monk told us, is in their knowledge of the routes and their sagacity in finding their way home when the avalanches obliterate all traces of the paths, and the *tourmentes* are absolutely blinding to every one else. They could not rescue anybody by themselves, and

when they go out are always accompanied by two of the brethren.

"The guides now grew impatient for our departure, and strongly urged our going before the sun began to melt the snow. And we *did* go at last, said farewell to the monastery with many thanks to our hospitable entertainers, and sorrowfully retraced our steps down the mountain—stopping every minute to look back until the Grand St. Bernard had totally disappeared, and we began to feel as if we had been in a dream since yesterday.

"We had now time to look around us and contemplate the magnificent aspect of the mountain pass through which we were threading our way. It was inconceivably grand—almost terrible—with nothing but snow-capped mountains and peaked *aiguilles* around us, nothing but snow above and beneath, no human habitation near us and no noise to be heard but the rushing of the mountain torrents under our feet. We got on better with our walking, and won the approbation of our guides; nevertheless, we were nearly as wet as before, and very glad to change shoes and stockings at La Cantine before we got on the mules again. It was a splendid day, and, even while we were struggling with the snow, we felt the intense heat of the sun. When we got to Martigny, Annie and I found our faces completely brown with the sun, and our necks looking as if we had had mustard plasters on them. I shall never forget how tired we were to-day on reaching Orsières;—the fatigue of sitting so many hours on the mules was almost worse than climbing the snow—particularly when there was no excitement of perils and precipices, and when the animals, in their hurry to get back, went at a horrid uneven pace, something between a walk and a trot."

CHAPTER IV

TWO SISTERS

"Our lives, and every day and hour
One symphony appear;
One road, one garden—every flower,
And every bramble dear."—R. L. STEVENSON.

IN the autumn of 1845, the Leschers moved into London. When Willie returned from Fribourg he found his elder sisters gradually assuming the reins of household government in the new home at 16 Nottingham Place. Aunt Caroline was still on the spot, a quiet influence for good, but Mr. Lescher rightly wished his daughters to emulate the valiant woman of the Book of Proverbs. Realising that all her virtues were based on a wise economy, he insisted on the young housekeepers confining their expenses to the limits of the sum he assigned to them. So strict was his discipline in this respect that they often had recourse to innocent ruses in order to escape the consequences of their inexperience. Many were their devices to reduce the weekly bills. "Oh, Papa, we never can get such lovely tea, as you give us when we call at your office. Do bring some home with you." And Papa, all unwary, would order a supply on his way home from the City—and, as a matter of course, pay for it, cash down.

The girls were given but a moderate amount of pocket money, and their quarterly allowance was often spent before it was received. In books rather than in dress lay their great temptation. When their father's birthday came round in April, more than once they went off to choose him some expensive book which was duly put down to his personal account at Burns's. Later when the bill came in, and their irate parent demanded an explanation, "Oh, Papa," they said together, in pained surprise, "why, you know we gave it to you for your birthday present."

There was always a family gathering at Nottingham Place

on Mr. Lescher's birthday. The whimsical wording of one invitation suggests that he wrote it with his eldest daughter leaning over his shoulder.

(WILLIAM LESCHER to FANNY GREHAN)

"*Easter Monday, 1846.*

"Now that we have got through Lenten austerities, and have renovated our bodily health by temperance, and our spiritual by holy shriving, we may be allowed to turn to more joyous thoughts, and talk a little of jollification and revelrie.

"I suppose you contemplate a visit to your Bromley kinsfolk, but even if no such thoughts are swimming on the surface of your musings, I hope that not the less will my request be entertained by you. The 21st of April was, I am sure you will allow, a great day for the cosmogony of my circle—or, if you don't allow it, you will admit that at all events it was a great day for me, for it ushered in my birth some six and forty springs ago. You have heretofore joined the merry party that usually assembles under my roof, and even now I turn with complacency to the remembrance of the part you took in the fun when, with 'spectacles on nose,' you charaded as an ancient dame on the anniversary of last year. Now we are going to have a large family party on the same day of the present *annus Domini*, and you and your Patricius must join us. We have invited, and expect, all the Bromley people, and it would be a sad disappointment to us not to have you and Grehan. So pray make up your mind and send me word that you will come and drink the honours in sparkling Falernian—No! we'll have Champagne and leave the old Roman drink to babblers like Horace who were ignorant of the *mousseux* in the grape's juice. Ye shall have sack to your heart's content and 'think not because we're virtuous (now) we shall have no more cakes and ale—aye, and ginger (preserved, of course) hot i' th' mouth, too.'

"It would seem that I was inditing an invitation to a party of 'jolly companions every one' instead of penning an invitation to ladye fair to honour me with her presence; and I am half ashamed of having named such gross and unintellectual adjuncts to the day's expected enjoyments. But Horace and Shakespeare are partly to be blamed, as their notions would

force themselves upon me. But for *you* there shall be flowers and 'sweet poesie,' jonquils and narcissus and the dark violet 'like Pandora's eye,' and there shall be music's strains melting in *douce harmonie*, and, better than all, kind smiles of welcome and warm hearts to greet ye.

"I have just heard from my cousin that you are at Bromley, and this that was intended for Southweald I am glad to have to send to a nearer point, because it augurs well for the success of my suit. Tell my cousin Susan¹ and her circle that they must not forget their promise to come. They must *all* come. No cool, calculating notions of Aunt Caroline's must keep even herself away. Tell her to bespeak Crump's most capacious fly that will hold six inside, and not to mind her flounce being a little deranged by the squeeze."

The Pitchfords found open house at Nottingham Place whenever piety or gaiety brought them to town, whilst the Leschers, on their side, had a standing invitation to "Bromley Arms," as they playfully styled their cousins' home.

It was about this time that an intimacy was formed with the family of Mr. John Wallis, the editor of *The Tablet*. Annie became close friends with Rose, the elder daughter, while Fanny was attracted by the sound common-sense and lively wit of Lucy. All four subsequently became sisters of Notre Dame. Annie Lescher and Rose Wallis, being made perfect in a short space, helped each other to prepare for death, and, in the same grave at Mortlake, together they await the Angel of the Resurrection. Lucy Wallis, as Sister Teresa of St. Joseph, worked for many years with her girlhood's friend in the Liverpool Training College, her buoyant nature and irrepressible sense of fun, lightening and brightening the daily toil of both Sisters and students.

To Mr. William Amherst,² another friend of these early days, we are indebted for many interesting reminiscences. He first met Mr. Lescher at a Conference of the Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul. He speaks of him as a model Catholic gentleman, of a kind and amiable disposition, taking a keen interest in all questions of the day, and pious without being pietistic. In all matters which touched upon religion he showed

¹ Mrs. Pitchford, Miss Caroline Nyren was her sister.

² Better known as Father Amherst, S.J. At this time he was a young barrister of about twenty-six.

great good sense, and a Catholic instinct that was truly remarkable. The two elder daughters are described as having been in every respect worthy of their father; "both were excellent examples of Catholic young ladies who, enjoying the world in a rational way, evidently gave virtue and religion the first place. They were equally liked by young men and young women, a thing not too common."

They had a strong sense of humour which showed itself in their sprightly conversation. Annie Lescher, though not as apt as Lucy Wallis, was quick at repartee, but in the home circle Fanny generally took the lead in conversation with that animation and eagerness which made her companionship so delightful. Both were not only excellent critics, but equally excellent mimics, yet they employed their powers with the most delicate charity. Proud as they could not but be of these charming girls, both father and aunt conceived it their duty to keep within bounds their sprightly fun. Sometimes when Fanny was delighting the dinner-table with her views on some interesting topic Miss Caroline Lescher would mildly interrupt the flow of eloquence by some practical question concerning household arrangements. Once when Mr. John Wallis was dining at Nottingham Place, the sharp eyes of the host detected a potato among the russets at dessert. He held it up before his unabashed daughters, remarking: "This is what happens when young ladies learn Latin and Greek!"

The two sisters edified every one by their regular attendance at daily Mass. Their piety and brightness had a great influence upon their brothers. Father Edward Lescher used to recall the pleasant evenings at home which Fanny planned for them. "I can still remember our enjoyment while she played the harp and Annie accompanied her on the piano." Yet the harp so readily played for father and brothers was wont to stand disused in a corner of the drawing-room on nights when the Leschers entertained, and it was evident by ever-ready pleasant excuses, such as "strings out of order," that Fanny did not care to display her talents.

Public night prayers were an institution in the Lescher household. More than once, as the family rose from their knees, Papa made an ostentatious sign of the Cross, announcing: "I am now going to say *my* night prayers, girls!" "Why, Papa, haven't you just said them?" "I could not call things

gabbled at such a rate 'prayers.' " And with bedroom candle in one hand and prayer book in the other, he would march majestically upstairs.

When came the days of their Oratorian enthusiasm¹ and the sisters wished to substitute Compline for the old-fashioned prayers in *The Garden of the Soul*, Papa met the proposal with a negative as decided as it was prompt. If their evenings were spent from home at ball or party or any other social function, they would say their night prayers with their father in the carriage, and, however late they returned, they made it a point to be at the half-past seven Mass next morning. Their fidelity in this respect so impressed a young seamstress living in the district that she asked for instruction and became a Catholic.

Father Amherst records that Fanny and Annie were familiar figures at most of the Catholic social gatherings in London at this period. Both sisters were fond of dancing, and they entered into all the gaiety with a zest and appreciation which is the special privilege of youth and innocence. Some Catholic girls of the period danced only square dances, but, as Edward Pitchford wisely remarked to a cousin just home from school, "It does not really matter what you dance so long as you are careful with whom you dance it." Most of the London clergy would have endorsed this sensible dictum. But the famous preacher of the 'forties, Dr. Gentili, a holy Italian priest of Rosmini's congregation, set his face against dancing in any shape or form, denouncing it in strong language from the pulpit. A number of Catholic young men, dismayed by this severity, sent a deputation to protest against his extreme views. "Dancing is a necessity," they urged, "in the cold, raw, foggy, English climate. All the doctors are of opinion that it is unhealthy to go to bed with cold feet and stagnant circulation." The astute Italian could not but recognise the force of this plea. "Well, then, I allow you to dance," he conceded, "but remember! It shall be the ladies in one room and the gentlemen in another!" Fortunately this counsel of perfection was in no wise binding on the consciences of the merry-makers!

¹ The London Oratory in King William Street, Strand, was founded in 1849, a year after Cardinal Newman had founded the Birmingham Oratory. The Community removed to Brompton in 1854, where the present Church was opened thirty years later.

Dr. Gentili's name is well-known in connection with the Oxford Movement. Sister Mary of St. Philip loved to recall the days when he thrilled her soul to the depths from the pulpit in Spanish Place. She described him as tall and dark, with aquiline features and expressive eyes, very graceful in gesture, especially when in the heat of oratory he flung his cloak across one shoulder after the fashion of a Roman toga. There is an amusing reference to this holy man in one of Fanny's letters about this time. She speaks of "a most romantic Italian servant" whom she wants her father to engage as butler, and whose chief qualifications seem to be his name, Carlo Borghese, and his physique, which she describes as "something between a bandit and Dr. Gentili."

Annie, too, felt the saintly influence of the good priest. After following a course of sermons in one of the *missions* which Dr. Gentili gave in London in 1848, she consulted him as to the choice of her state of life. He listened patiently to her perplexities, and then said: "If there is any young man who wishes to marry you, take him." "I am glad he put it that way," she remarked later to one of her cousins. "If he had asked, 'Is there any young man you are wishful to marry?' truth would have compelled me to answer 'Fifty, at the very least!'" Christ's gentle knock at the door of Annie Lescher's heart was soon to make itself heard.

But serious studies were still pursued by the sisters. A Miss Bache, with whom they became acquainted, interested them in Dante. Fanny translated some of the *Lives of the Saints* in the Oratorian Series, and an article by her on Savonarola, which appeared in *Dolman's Magazine*, showed the rightly broad views of the writer, and attracted, we are told, a good deal of attention among non-Catholics. In lighter vein her pen busied itself with *The Nottingham Place Gazette*, a most amusing periodical for private circulation.

"Yet," Father Amherst notes, "Fanny, with all her strong mind, good judgment, great talents, and sound information, was very far from being 'a literary woman, with the imputation of pedantry'—the definition which my dictionary gives me of a blue-stocking. There was in her an entire absence of everything which could be called *masculine*, and her fine feminine qualities were strongly marked. The Lescher girls were by no means all head; both had large and sympathetic hearts."

The same writer remarks in both sisters "a certain matronly dignity which was very becoming." Fanny's intellectual countenance and fine presence made her noticeable in whatever company she chose to find herself. The elder Stanfield, R.A., pronounced her charming, and insisted on introducing her to Charles Dickens.

A letter to Fanny Grehan describes her first visit to the distinguished painter : "Yesterday we went to see Stanfield, the artist, and were taken over his studio, and shown all his treasures by the man himself. I daresay the Bromley people told you how we came to know him; how we met him at the Wardell's wedding; and how we called at Bromley with him on our way home; how we puzzled them all, how they wouldn't believe that he was the *real* Stanfield, and couldn't in any way connect him with the *Carrara Mountains*. Because why? (as Dr. Gentili says). Why, my dear, he looks no more like an artist than you or I do. He has no brow sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought; no poet's eye in fine frenzy rolling; no high art in his habiliment, or poetry in his shirt collar. He is simply a frank-hearted, stout, comfortable, and rather Irish-looking gentleman—quite the gentleman too, with plenty of good humour and a great deal of interesting conversation. We got quite intimate with him on the wedding day, and were very much delighted with him, and it was then he gave us an invitation to come and see his studio. So we went yesterday, and were most kindly received by himself and Mrs. Stanfield. His drawing-room walls were hung from top to bottom with small water-colour drawings by the first artists of the day—Turner, Wilkie, Caldcott, Prout, Collins, Cattermole, Copley, Fielding, etc., etc. I never saw so many gems together in my life. Then such portfolios as he showed—full of the most exquisite sketches. He would hardly let us see any of his own, but kept putting them out of the way. However, in the studio we had nothing but his pictures; some beautiful things he had just finished and one he had on hand, but nothing so magnificent as the *Carrara Mountains*. He is a great friend of Herbert's, and spoke of him with the greatest enthusiasm, and much indignation at the small price he obtained for his *Holy Family*."

Much in the world, Fanny and Annie Lescher were in no sense of it. Its gaieties left their pure hearts unspotted.

Their minds were too noble to be ensnared by the *fascinatio nugacitatis*—the bewitchery of trifles. *Pour un grand cœur tout est petit* is a jotting in one of Sister Mary of St. Philip's spiritual note-books, and hers, even in girlhood, was taken up wholly with the great things of the Kingdom of God. Her extraordinary gift of sympathy, her infectious enthusiasm, her power of being interested in many things at once, of conducting *de front* many different undertakings, without any of that scattering of self which results in, if it does not denote, shallowness—all these her qualities had full scope and stimulus in Catholic London of the 'forties and early 'fifties.

There was first of all the Oxford Movement—or to be more accurate—its immediate results—the Second Spring, after the conversion of Newman and of Faber in 1845.

"I was at school at Northampton," writes her brother Edward, "when I wrote to tell Fanny I had just seen Father Faber received into the Church. I received in reply an enthusiastic letter telling me how she had been praying for his conversion ever since she had read his book on Foreign Churches. I was quite quickened into life by her enthusiasm."

Her letters are full of allusions to the great influx of converts—

"Mary Leake has been staying with us, and of course we saw a great deal of her *preux chevalier*, Mr. Tebay. . . . I think, upon the whole, they are tolerably suited to each other. We went with him one day to Mr. Bennett's church at Knightsbridge,¹ and heard the service there; the singing was all Gregorian and very beautiful, ten little acolytes in surplices sat on each side of the choir, and there were candles on the altar and all about the sanctuary. One of his curates has just resigned his living preparatory to entering the Church."

"Feb. 12th, 1848.—We find the Capes very nice acquaintances; Mr. Capes very agreeable and conversable. He amuses us a good deal by his coolness and sangfroid about everything. They say *The Rambler*² succeeds pretty well. I fancy it is taken a good deal by Protestants. We have been introduced to another very nice convert, a friend of Mr. Capes, Mr. Robert Ormsby. He was formerly a Protestant parson,

¹ The well-known Anglican Church.

² A weekly journal, first started in 1848: John Moore Capes was proprietor for the first ten years of its existence. It was at variance with *The Dublin* as being a convert production, whereas the latter was "born Catholic."

and married Mr. Dalgairns's sister; she is not yet converted. We have Mr. Scott Nasmyth Stokes (the quondam Secretary of the Campden Society) settled close to us in Nottingham Place, so our acquisitions in the convert line are very strong."

The last name, though it will appear again in these pages, deserves already more than a passing mention. From the very outset of his acquaintance with her, he gauged Frances Lescher's mental and moral worth, and not a day passed without his coming to talk with her. His wife once remarked, "I am so glad he has Fanny to talk to; he must get so tired of poor stupid me!" We shall see later that the finger of God was in the seeming chance which cast him across her path. The same may be said of the gentle and scholarly convert mentioned in another letter—T. W. Allies, then a minister of the Church of England. "Papa met Mr. Allies at dinner the other day and was delighted with him. He is convinced he will soon be a Catholic. He [Mr. A.] told Mr. Ward that the moment he saw his way clear, no thoughts of his family or his living should prevent him from taking the step. There is a new convert in Suffolk—a Mr. Stewart, a clergyman near Ipswich, who has been taken into the church with his wife and family."

On July 12, 1850, she writes: "There is not much convert news. Mr. Allies has been received, but Mr. Dodsworth has gone back to Christchurch. We have a very interesting girl in hand—the sister of the curate at Shepherd's Bush. She is very nearly a Catholic, and we hope soon to take her to Father Faber. Please to pray for her." And some months later: "We have just got Mr. Allies' book on the *Supremacy*, which Papa says is supremely excellent. He is now making his general confession to Father Newman at St. Wilfrid's. Mr. Bennett of Knightsbridge is making a retreat either at St. Wilfrid's or at Mount St. Bernard's, so I suppose his conversion is decided also. Mr. Allies intends taking pupils. They will not have enough for the necessaries of life, poor things!"

Like Mr. Stokes, Mr. Allies proved a dear and life-long friend. His interest in the Liverpool Training College—Our Lady of Mount Pleasant, as he loved to call it—endured to the close of his saintly life, and is one of its proud traditions. When in 1895 he sent to Sister Mary of St. Philip a copy of

his book, *Saint Peter, His Name and Office*, he wrote on the fly leaf :

“DEAR SISTER MARY OF ST. PHILIP,

“Please receive as my Christmas greeting the fourth edition of a book, the first of which was published in 1852, that is three years before I saw you in the Convent of Namur, and besought of the Reverend Mother that you might be sent to Liverpool for the work which holds you still. The book may so even serve as a testimony that our friendship has lasted forty years. And such friendships look forward to face ‘the eternal years.’

“T. W. ALLIES.”

Quite distinct from the Oxford conversions, there was at this time a vigorous movement going on among English Catholics which had originated in the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829. It developed in many ways; in some of its forms, which demanded personal action, only men could take part. But in much that was done, women could assist by their approval and encouragement. “Yet,” says Father Amherst, “there were both men and women amongst English Catholics who, in different degrees, discouraged and opposed the progress which was begun, and strongly advocated, by such men as Wiseman, Father Spencer, Frederick Lucas, Dr. Gentili and Pugin. But the greater part, I think, of the older generation, and certainly the greater part of the younger generation, strongly supported the opinions and, as far as they could, helped on the action, of the great men I have mentioned. Mr. Lescher and his daughters were amongst these.”

To us who live in days when the administrative and executive work of women has been tested by the fire of tribulation, it is grateful to recall that she, whose blessed destiny it was to train countless young girls for a life of active service for God in the world, even then threw herself with characteristic energy and zeal into every good work that presented itself.

Not long after the formation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in England, some Catholic ladies in London established the Society of St. Elizabeth of Hungary. Fanny and Annie joined this association, which had for its president, Lady Granville, though its practical organisation seems to have been

entirely in the hands of Margaret, Countess of Newburgh, and the Hon. Mrs. Edward Petre, who, later, became a Sister of Notre Dame, widely known and revered as Sister Mary of St. Francis.

The spirit of that burning zeal and that earnestness of purpose which were characteristic of Sister Mary of St. Philip, nay, which *were*, in a sense, Sister Mary of St. Philip, breathes in almost every line of a long letter which Fanny wrote in 1846 to her confidante, Fanny Grehan.

“ I think you will be glad to hear that your MS. has at length safely departed on its journey towards Derby. I hope I have not altered too much. The chief thing I have done has been to divide the sentences which were sometimes of a gigantic length, and which read incomparably better with full stops instead of commas;—on referring to the French original I find it quite a literary curiosity in the long paragraph line. I wrote a little note to Mr. Sing, just to put him in mind that it is now all ready for publication, and I do hope his Reverence will soon bring it out, as I have no idea of your taking all that trouble for nothing. I am sure the trammels of translation must be dreadful to such a fertile mind as yours, and I shall never rest until you do something *original*. Miles Gerald Keon would be delighted with you; and think what a sin it is to do no good with the talents entrusted to you! I have sometimes very sublime ideas on this subject and often wish for you to put them in execution. I want to reform the whole Catholic world—Catholic society and Catholic young ladies especially. A grand idea, isn't it? the best of which is its *extreme practicability*! Upon my word, though you may laugh, I declare I try my hand sometimes on the young lady part, but have not as yet been very successful. I should like to explain myself a little on this head, for fear you should think me *non compos*. You must know then, that since I have been in town, I have noticed that the Catholic young *men* are reforming *themselves*. Their societies and guilds, their Brotherhood of St. Vincent de Paul and the infusion of Puseyite converts amongst them, seem to have effected and to be effecting great changes; but the young ladies, you see, are not worked upon by any of these outward movements, and it provokes me to see how little interest they take in Catholic affairs, and how much they shrink from anything

active in the cause of religion. As a proof, amongst all our Sisters of Christian Doctrine there is not one young person in our own station—not one among those we are in the habit of meeting and knowing; and not for want of asking, as I can testify. And now you perceive in what they want reforming, or, rather, stirring up, for they are horribly sleepy; and now, my dear, perhaps you can understand how, every now and then, I have a tremendous *fit* of reform and a burning desire to teach them *earnestness* and excite them to enthusiasm. I have great hopes that what I can only long to do Dr. Gentili's preaching will really accomplish. I never before heard anything like the practical earnestness of his sermons—without flowers of rhetoric or flights of imagination—they startle us with their intense truth and seem to come home equally to everybody. Excuse this rhapsody, dearest Fanny, but I could not help it, and it reminds me of 'auld lang syne' to pour out all my thoughts to you.

"To descend to facts, I suppose you heard of my going off to Bromley to spend a day or two while Father Tom¹ was there. Accommodation being rather scarce at the 'Bromley Arms Hotel,' Annie had a bed at Mrs. Hall's, while I was provided with a suite of apartments on the third storey. I enjoyed myself very much. Father Tom and I quarrelled over Pugin and made up over a print of Our Blessed Lady in a gold and blue frame which I got from Remington's for him, and with which he seemed much pleased. It has really the most heavenly countenance, and you can hardly help thinking, when you look at it, that the artist felt like some of those early Christian painters who used to write at the foot of their Madonnas, *fecit ob suam devotionem*. I was charmed with Miss Knight's playing, but I did not get much out of her, though she seems a merry and most amiable girl, with a particular devotion to Mr. S. We had a soirée at the Halls', and ditto at the Nyrens', the chief characteristic of which was a magnificent spread in the shape of a hot supper;—the principal guests invited to meet us were ham and chicken, an amiable family of lamb cutlets, and a highly Pickwickian round of beef. Annie and I came home on Friday just in time to receive Uncle and Aunt Isaac Hoy on their way from Ramsgate. Dom Lopez was down at Royal Crescent—saying

¹ The Rev. T. Pitchford, Fanny Grehan's uncle.

Mass for them in *Pugin's Chapel*! Oh, what a perverse star I was born under! By the way, the name of Pugin's governess is Holmes, and I thought she looked like a 'convertite' and an interesting person.

"Did you ever hear what delicious excursions we made to the churches in and about Ramsgate and Margate just before we left? Such sketching and rubbing of brasses and numerous other adventures which my paper has not room for.

"We went with Papa on Monday to the Meeting of the Brotherhood.¹ It was very edifying, the proceedings beginning and ending with prayers, which gave the whole affair a shade of solemnity very different from public meetings in general. There were a great many ladies there, attracted, like ourselves, principally by Dr. Gentili. Lady Bedingfield came escorted by Lord Stafford, and Mr. and Mrs. Stafford-Jerningham; but the lion of the audience was Mr. Francis Whitgreave (the *real* Mr. Whitgreave, not the one we met at Mrs. Barnewell's), who looked exactly as if he were sitting for a sepulchral brass. Brother Amherst and Brother Blount, the secretary and treasurer, read their reports with the most beautiful bashfulness. Maria Gorman informed me that they were dreadfully afraid of the Catholic quizzing, and they looked just like schoolboys at an exhibition. You must not judge of Dr. Gentili by the report in *The Tablet*, as it is impossible to report *him*; it was a beautiful address and the Brothers said they would not change a syllable of it. He preached a sermon last Sunday at St. John's Wood and the Halls came up to hear him. After Mass we all went in to Mr. O'Neal, and he introduced us to Dr. Gentili. We chatted with him for about a quarter of an hour; nothing could exceed his kindness and affability. He gave us all his blessing before we came away and promised to pray for us. How I do wish you could see him, Fanny! He is certainly the most perfect priest I ever met, with a countenance which is the exact personification of St. Bernard, and an eloquence which reminds you of what Savonarola must have been, when he preached against Paganism in the days of the Medici.

"Only think of your friend the Archbishop of Damascus being over here at last. Aunt Caroline heard him say Mass yesterday at the French chapel; he is to be there for a fort-

¹ That is, of St. Vincent de Paul, of which Mr. Lescher was president.

night, so I intend to go and see him also. We had a delightful visit last week from the Rev. Mr. Moore, of Birmingham. He was on his way home after a church tour in Brittany with Mr. Lloyd and Mr. Coope, two of the converts, you know. They spent some days at St. Malo with the Watts-Russells, who have taken up their abode there. Mr. Moore says every one in the Midland District is delighted with Mr. Faber and his Order of the 'Will of God.' He has a large house near St. Chad's, and twelve associates have joined him already. They are completely *under the clergy*, and go about visiting the sick and instructing. Sixty persons come to them every evening for catechetical instructions. They say that the Cambridge men rather take to Mr. Faber, while the Oxford ones go to Maryvale. Mr. Newman sets off for Rome in September with Mr. Talbot; they are expected to be absent about a year. Pray read when you can Newman's exquisite article on Keble in *The Dublin*; Ward's, too, seems very good on Blanco White; Dr. Wiseman's is on Steinmetz.

"Farewell at last, dear Fanny; I should be afraid of sending such a letter to any one that didn't live in a cottage in the country."

Fanny and Annie threw themselves into all the Catholic work that lay to their hand with characteristic *élan* and persevering thoroughness; at the same time they were entirely free from that spirit of meddling and that fussy interference in ecclesiastical arrangements in which some lay helpers, both men and women, habitually indulge. This, to those who know, will seem no light praise. It belongs more to the elder sister than to the younger, for, says, Father Amherst, "Fanny was born to lead, whereas Annie, with all her fine qualities, was made to be led." With her vigorous intellect, physical strength, steady purpose and magnificent tenacity, Fanny must often, as the same friend reflects, have been tempted with strong thoughts and a desire to interfere when she saw weaker natures acting in a more feeble manner than she would have done.

Dr. Wiseman's famous article in *The Tablet*, calling on all Catholics to assist in the work of the Church, sent many a skilled woman to the embroidery frame to take up the beautiful old craft in the service of God's house. The Lescher girls were

amongst the most eager. Fanny writes : " On the strength of Dr. Wiseman's Gothic tastes, Annie and I have begun a lovely white vestment for Spanish Place. It is in one of Pugin's prettiest patterns, and we hope to see it made up in the flowing form of the olden time."

A stole embroidered by the sisters for the Cardinal was finished in time for the opening of St. George's Cathedral, Southwark, and was long treasured by His Eminence as a work of art.

There were other works besides vestment-making. At the first mission given at Spanish Place, Dr. Gentili asked that three things should be done : the church was to be left open during certain hours of the day ; a statue of the Blessed Virgin was to be put up ; and there was to be Benediction once a week, on a day other than Sunday. The first requirement must have rejoiced the hearts of Fanny and Annie, who at Stratford, out of their private purse, had paid a woman to keep the chapel door open that they and others might visit Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. The money for the statue was raised by subscription. The Leschers took great interest in procuring it, and Mr. Lescher agreed to act as treasurer of the fund. Father Amherst tells us : " I think that at this time the Chelsea chapel was the only one which possessed an image of Our Lady, and it was not very easy to procure such a thing. It was at last decided to get one carved in stone at the works of Mr. Myers, the then well-known builder, who got all his designs from Augustus Welby Pugin. I was appointed to look after the execution of the work, and occasionally reported progress at Nottingham Place. The young ladies were much amused at the reports which I had several times to make, that the sculptor had been so drunk for a whole fortnight that he had not been able to use his chisel. The statue was at last delivered, and a very good one it was. It was just over the altar of the Lady Chapel which had been built by Father Jim Reardon. At first the stone was plain, but was subsequently either gilded or painted. I have also been informed that the image has been transferred to the new church. If it is there, it is likely to remain ; and though its origin will be, and perhaps already is, forgotten, it will not be forgotten by the Mother of God herself, that William Joseph Lescher and his two daughters, Fanny and Annie, were chiefly instrumental in its actual

erection. The sisters themselves also secretly purchased and gave the first pictures of the Stations of the Cross erected in Spanish Place."

As to the week-day Benediction, they were no longer needed, as at Stratford, to manage the choir and play the harmonium. In one of Fanny's letters she writes to the other Fanny: "Female singing in choirs is to be very speedily put an end to, and it is said that, if possible, people are to be coaxed into Gregorian." It seems that it was not easy for the priests of the Mission to muster a week-day choir, so Mr. Amherst and some of his friends offered to do the singing, while an old Oscott schoolfellow of his undertook the organ. Father Amherst writes: "As we were, several of us at least, Oscotians, we one day thought we would treat the congregation to the singing of a Benediction exactly as it used to be on Thursday evenings at Oscott College; so instead of singing between the *O Salutaris* and the *Tantum ergo* the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, we gave them the Psalm *Quam dilecta*. The next time I called at Nottingham Place I was at once attacked about this—the Amateur Choir of Catholic Young Gentlemen, forsooth, had sung a Benediction without anything in honour of Our Blessed Lady! The offence was not repeated."

But the labour of love which chiefly engrossed the heart of Frances Lescher in these Nottingham Place days was the teaching and instruction of children, and the visiting of the poor at their homes. Every Sunday afternoon, she and her sisters and cousins went to the Sunday School, and in the unavoidable absence of the schoolmistress, she would conduct the children to Vespers. Not content with this weekly work of zeal, Fanny arranged for certain children and ignorant people to come to the house at stated times for religious instruction, a proceeding which did not meet with the unqualified approval of other members of the family, nor of the servants. On one occasion a tramp presented himself as pupil, and received catechetical teaching in the dining-room. Later on, some silver spoons were missed. The ingenious catechist could throw no light on their disappearance, and it was an irate butler who insinuated to his master that "the man Miss Fanny had been teaching might have had something to do with it."

It is only from Monica and Edward Lescher that we learn

anything of her regular visiting of the poor in their homes; she herself never spoke of it. One day, Monica, whom she used to take with her on her rounds of charity, suddenly cried as they hurried down the courts and alleys: "Oh, Fanny, I can go no further!" and turned back, while Fanny pursued her way to the home of the poor woman she meant to visit. Her sister indeed testifies that the men in these miserable slums always treated her with marked respect as she passed along, and Father Edward that "she so gained the affection of the poor people she visited that they received her with open arms." On one occasion a policeman came to the house she had entered, and begged her to remain there until he gave her notice, as what was going on in the court below was not fit for her to witness. But nothing of this kind appalled or daunted her; she went her way of love fearless and indefatigable. Once Monica accompanied her to some wretched building where they had to pass through a room full of rude men, and then climb a ladder to reach the poor, lone woman, who was the object of her charity. On entering the miserable lodging, they found her lying very ill in bed with no one to care for her and no means of sending for medical aid. Off went Fanny at once for the parish doctor, and not finding him at home left word for him to come to the poor woman as soon as possible; then she purchased provisions and hastened back with them to the attic. It was fireless and dirty; she set to work to make it tidy, putting Monica (who was all of a tremble at finding herself in such a place) to light the fire—a task in which she succeeded badly until Fanny came to her aid. She then cooked the food, and was occupied in making the poor woman comfortable in her bed when the doctor arrived. He was considerably astonished at what he saw, and said, "I wish all young ladies were like you!"

Dame Margaret Mary, to whom we owe these details, sums up in one short sentence her sister's life and character: "She never seemed to have a thought for herself." The same sister tells us that after a day devoted to household duties and works of charity, Fanny would sit up, far into the night, her pen busily engaged on the Oratorian Series of *The Lives of the Saints*. The secret of such untiring energy and selfless zeal lay deeper than natural activity; *Caritas Christi urget*, and the love of Christ was the motive power of Frances Lescher's every action.

She had a singularly intense devotion to the Blessed Sacrament of which now and again a word would reveal the veiled secret. And the love of the Mother went, of course, with that of the Son, and was as simply and practically shown. On the eve of Our Lady's Nativity she would collect money from Edward and her sisters, and drop it into the post-box at the presbytery directed to "Our Blessed Lady, a birthday gift from four of her devoted children."

Jesus in the Sacred Host, Jesus in the Poor, Mary the Mother of Jesus—these three—had not Frances Lescher the best gifts, the essential loves of the true Sister of Notre Dame !

CHAPTER V

THE CALL OF CHRIST

"Methought I heard One calling, 'Childe';
And I reply'd, 'My Lord'."—G. HERBERT.

IN the summer of 1847, Frances Lescher spent six weeks on the Continent with her friend Miss Moore, under the escort of the Rev. Mr. Moore of Birmingham, whose name has already occurred in these pages.

The diary of this tour is almost entirely devoted to details of churches, museums and treasures of sacred art. There are numerous pencil sketches, too, of altar, spire, or rood-screen, of wayside Cross or Gothic pump. Though the girlish jokes of the earlier diary of 1844 are absent from this journal, yet numerous allusions to "splendid scrambles" on the Alpine crags, to "romantic boating" on the Swiss and Italian lakes, all bear witness to her unabated physical energy and love of Nature. And always and everywhere we note the same simple piety and thoroughly practical outlook. Religion with Frances Lescher was not a garment to be donned and doffed at will; it was an integral part of her very being.

At Mainz she fingers lovingly the old vestments "with embroidery so thick that it literally appears carved." At Fribourg she groans over "the unchristian angels in Renaissance style." She sees at Baden "some pretty devices of letters in moss fastened on wire, which we thought might be made available for church decoration at home." After visiting Basle, they have a delicious row on Lago Maggiore, and land for a brief pilgrimage to Our Lady of the Rock, "along the most perfect *Via Crucis*." As they row home in the deepening twilight, they sing the *Ave Maris Stella*.

Milan is reached just in time for the great Feast of the Martyrs, Saints Gervase and Protase, whose relics have reposed in the Duomo from the days of St. Ambrose.

"Saturday, June 19th, Mr. Moore said Mass early in the chapel of St. Charles. We rose late, and went to Sant' Ambrogio for High Mass at half-past nine—a splendid function with about fifty priests in the sanctuary." Then follows a fine appreciation of the Duomo, and a careful comparison of the liturgical details of the Ambrosian and the Roman rites.

Next day they visited the great hospital—"miles and miles, so to speak, of wards and dormitories each with its own tutelary saint, and abounding in crucifixes and holy-water stoups." There is the lazaretto, too, hallowed in her memory by *I Promessi Sposi*, and the Church of San Lorenzo where the card, inscribed *Pax Vobis*, placed on the door intimated to all that the *Dottrina Cristiana* was going on. The church was quite full. Children and adults crowded the benches to listen to the instructions imparted by members of the Confraternity, chiefly layfolk. A priest presided over every two or three classes, moving from group to group to supervise or examine, and giving a general instruction to all at the close.

The diary is to serve instead of letters home, and one feels that Fanny's "untravelling" heart is ever turning to her absent dear ones. At Verona, where she has the honour of breakfasting with Rosmini, the spiritual father of Dr. Gentili, she laments Annie's absence. At Venice she devotes an afternoon to the Armenian Monastery at San Lazzaro, for Fanny Grehan knows the Archbishop of Damascus and is interested in things Syrian.

Love of history, literature and Christian art and liturgy added zest to the well-filled fortnight in Northern Italy before they left Venice—"with many sighs"—on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul.

The week in the Tyrol was less breathless as far as museums and churches were concerned. Interest here centred on the "beautiful Catholic customs," and the simple folk, the men in her eyes "all so many Hofers." Page 148, one of the duller pages in the diary for the casual reader, gives a meagre record of an important event in Frances Lescher's spiritual life—her visit to Maria Mörl in the Franciscan Convent at Caldaro. The entry runs: "Had the blessed privilege of remaining a little while in the presence of the ecstatica. Afterwards walked about Caldaro, and went into several churches; but as we

could think of nothing but the angelic Maria, I remember very little about them."

Long years afterwards, one St. Agnes's Eve—probably in 1895—her religious sisters had the story of that interview from Sister Mary of St. Philip's own lips:

"Not long before I entered religion I was travelling in the Tyrol with Miss Moore. We had each other's confidence, and often discussed our vocations. We went to see the ecstasies of the Tyrol, who had the reputation of possessing the gift of prophecy. She gave us each a picture of Saint Agnes under which were written the words: 'They shall follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.' We were delighted, and received the small present as a message from heaven, determining to give ourselves to our Lord as soon as possible. My friend soon after joined the Dominicans at Stone and became Sister Agnes Philip. I have always felt that I have a claim on Saint Agnes, and that she is one of my special friends."

But only in one another did the two girls confide. The tour went on as it had begun, a series of enthusiasms over churches and museums, till England was reached in July, and we find the culminating entry at Ramsgate—

"Went to Saint Augustine's and all over Pugin's house with himself."¹

The message which came to her at Caldaro was to remain for years "the secret of the King," hidden safe within the heart of Frances Lescher. In the eyes of her friends she came home, her mind, of course, broadened by travel, her sound Catholic sense strengthened and stimulated, but otherwise unchanged. We already know that she had set her face steadfastly towards Jerusalem, and that even at this time she counted all things as loss but Christ and Him crucified.

The next year, 1848, the year of revolutions, ushered in for English Catholics an era of corporate development, a quickening and a deepening of the religious spirit in individual souls, an opening out to many of divers paths to holiness.

With the Jesuit Fathers at Bolton Street the Leschers had long been on intimate terms, for William Lescher was "Old Stonyhurst," and staunch in his fidelity to the Society. In

¹ Pugin always looked upon St. Augustine's Church at Ramsgate as his masterpiece, because, being his own paymaster, he was not hampered in his plans by monetary considerations.

the spring of 1848 Fanny and Annie were introduced to the saintly Father de Buggenoms, who resided at the recently founded house of the Redemptorist Fathers at Clapham, of which Father de Held was superior. Father de Buggenoms was a man of no common spiritual experiences, and an eminent director of souls, and both the sisters were much indebted to him for counsel and guidance.

Then the Oratorians arrived in London, and the wisdom, piety and eloquence of Father Faber, the heart-warming and soul-inspiring devotional exercises at the Oratory in King William Street, stirred both young and old to rise to higher things. The echoes of the old sweet hymns, then new, passed into Fanny's heart and clung there with lingering fragrance till the day of her death, when there floated in at her window from the lips of her students the words she had first loved fifty years before—

“ Oh ! His Human Face and Features,
They were passing sweet to see,
Thou beholdest them this moment,
Mother, show them now to me.”

Zeal for the beauty of God's house united father and daughter in spiritual joy when St. George's Cathedral, Southwark, was opened on the Feast of Our Lady Help of Christians, 1848. This was one of the first great churches erected by English Catholics since the Reformation. Mrs. Pitchford relates in her diary how the Bishop, Dr. Doyle, showed her over the building when it was nearing completion, and fined her three shillings for miscalling it a *chapel* three times in half-an-hour. Many foreign bishops attended the opening ceremony, and among them the Archbishop of Trèves, who was the guest of the Leschers during his stay in London.

A week after the opening, the first Requiem Mass sung in St. George's was at the funeral of the Hon. Edward Petre, a man prominent in all good works for the benefit of the Catholic poor. As members of St. Elizabeth's Society, the Lescher girls must often have come in contact with his noble-hearted widow, a very old friend of their aunt, Mrs. Pitchford. In the first hours of her bereavement, Laura Petre consecrated her life by vow to the service of Christ in His poor, but Divine Providence did not immediately point out her path. As yet neither she nor Frances Lescher knew anything of the Sisters of Notre

Dame. But God, who disposes all things sweetly, led a small community of Blessed Julie Billiat's daughters to London, in the following September, where, in poverty and contradiction, they began their humble apostolate in a small house in Bedford Row, Clapham.

Even had the will of God been made manifestly clear in her regard at this time, home circumstances made it well-nigh impossible for Frances Lescher to follow her religious vocation. In the autumn of 1848 came the first of those gentle and imperative calls from Christ which were to break up the happy home-circle.

Fanny, now twenty-three, was judged capable of taking entire charge of the home. Monica had left school, and Agnes had taken her place at Winchester. Arthur was at Stonyhurst, Edward had his desk in his father's office, and Willie was learning scientific farming in Cumberland. Aunt Caroline, who had devoted herself so long and so generously to her brother and his children, felt that her task of self-sacrifice was ended. From her early girlhood her heart had been drawn to consecrate herself to God in the religious state, but, as long as duty seemed to demand her presence in the Lescher household, she had submitted to delay. Now that all obstacles were removed, she decided to satisfy the long desire of her soul.

She spoke to no one of her purpose, but left the house quite secretly on the Feast of St. Michael and all the Angels. She had taken the precaution of packing her boxes at the house of an old servant, and her departure became known only when a letter she had left on her dressing-table revealed the accomplished fact. Her brother hastened after her on the road to Winchester in the hope of inducing her to return with him. But she stood firm. Nevertheless, at her age, and after so many years of ease and independence, the brave deed cost her much. She used to relate in after years how, on reaching the station at Winchester, she turned her steps towards the Cathedral, and in the cemetery wept bitterly over the sacrifice of her dear ones; how God came to her aid by recalling to her the promise made to those who forsake all for Christ's sake; and how, rising up, she went with renewed courage and great cheerfulness to knock at the convent door.

To the end of her life Caroline Lescher, henceforth Dame Mary Frances, kept the twenty-ninth of September as a special

feast—the day on which she had sung her *In exitu*. The blessed angels, whose hands had borne her up, kept her in all her ways during the nineteen years of her religious life. Who shall say how her prayers furthered the work of grace in the hearts of those whom she had mothered so faithfully and so patiently !

Shortly after his aunt's departure Edward was stricken by some form of temporary paralysis. Fanny and her sisters lavished the greatest care upon him, and the illness not yielding to the prescribed remedies they resolved to make a novena of pilgrimages to the tomb of his patron saint. They could not, however, obtain permission to enter St. Edward's Chapel in Westminster Abbey except with the ordinary group of sight-seers. On reaching the shrine Fanny, then as ever a complete stranger to human respect, fell at once on her knees in fervent prayer. An anxious verger tapped her on the shoulder remarking : " If you want to do anything particular, Miss, you must have an order from the Dean." Swiftly came the spirited answer : " I was not aware that it is doing anything particular to say prayers in a church." And in militant mood and with not a little feminine malice, Fanny hurried off to the Dean's house to obtain the requisite permission. Unfortunately that dignitary was out of town, but the rest of the nine days the pilgrims were suffered to kneel undisturbed at the shrine.

So fresh and so frank was her enjoyment of the world, so keen and manifold were her interests, so skilfully were her deeper thoughts concealed under a veil of sportive talk, that few, if any, could detect the silent workings of the Holy Spirit in the soul of Frances Lescher. When in 1850 Monica confided to her eldest sister her intention of becoming a nun, it was with a shock of surprise she heard the answer : " How strange it would be if we were all nuns ! "

There was one friend, however, to whom Fanny's heart was, then as always, an open book, and who was privileged to read there the lofty aspirations and the intense fervour of her cousin's spiritual life with all its currents setting straight to God. For the Grehans left Southweald in the autumn of 1847 to fix their home at Mount Plunket in County Roscommon, and then began a series of letters from Fanny to Mrs. Grehan, which have happily preserved for us many interesting details of years which brought both sorrow and joy to the Lescher household.

Annie's vocational perplexities were much in evidence during a visit which Mrs. Grehan paid her friends in the summer of 1849. She still wished to be a nun, yet felt in no wise drawn towards the Benedictines at Winchester, the Sepulchrines at Newhall, or the Augustinians at Bruges¹—the only nuns with whom she had hitherto come in contact. Her then confessor would not take upon himself the responsibility of deciding for her. Her friend, Rose Wallis, wished to join the Sisters of Notre Dame, and, in order to study their mode of life more closely, was actually a pupil in their boarding-school at Clapham. But, though she might see the Sisters at their daily work, the young aspirant knew little of the community life, and still less of the inner life, of Blessed Julie's daughters, and therefore could not communicate to Annie any items of interest on this point.

Not far from Notre Dame, Bedford Row, was St. Anne's Retreat, Queen Square, the headquarters of the pious Association of the *Filles de Marie*. At a time when the religious habit was not tolerated in public these ladies moved unobtrusively in Society and among the poor—doing whatever good work their hands found to do. Miss Prestwich, their Superior, always welcomed to St. Anne's any who wished to make a spiritual retreat, and Mrs. Grehan took the opportunity afforded by her visit to London of spending a few days in solitude. It was then that she met the saintly Father de Buggenoms, whose personality so impressed her that she persuaded Annie to consult him about her future. Both Fanny and Annie made a retreat at St. Anne's in September under the direction of the holy Redemptorist.

Early in the New Year the Bromley household had a terrible shock. Edward Pitchford's wife, who was also cousin of the Leschers, died of scarlet fever, leaving two little boys—the younger but three days old.

(FRANCES LESCHER to MRS. GREHAN)

“16 Nottingham Place,
“January 8, 1850.

“It was a great comfort to me to read and think over all you said about our dear Anastasia. I feel so strongly all

¹ John Nyren's daughter, Mary Anne, was for some years Superior of the English Convent, Bruges. She died in 1844.

you say about her straightforward fidelity to all that God showed her she ought to do. How hard it is to be like her even in what seemed so simple and unostentatious!

"I have been reading a sermon of Newman's on Perseverance in Grace, and I could not help acknowledging that there is cause for thankfulness when any one is taken away in what seems only the beginning of their spiritual life. . . .

"We have now Mr. and Miss Moore staying here. She is a dear, good little creature of great sanctity and of splendid views. . . .

"I am in a very undecided state as yet, so please to pray with a special intention for my enlightenment. We hear the most wonderful stories of Mr. Newman as a director, the kindest and gentlest, yet the most painstaking and exacting, of confessors. We are now in the midst of his *Sermons*, which I daresay you have seen advertised. Annie and I could not resist buying the book for ourselves."

At this time the name of Miss Agnew occurs frequently in the Mount Plunket letters. This lady, after her reception into the Church, tried her vocation as a Sister of Mercy, but eventually resolved to found a contemplative order of her own.¹ Her convent was situated near St. George's Cathedral, Southwark, and Fanny and Annie often visited her there, for she was a great friend of their aunt, now Dame Mary Frances, with whom she corresponded. The Leschers and Pitchford girls playfully styled the convent "London Abbey," a name they found in *Rome and the Abbey*, the sequel to Miss Agnew's popular novel, *Geraldine, a Tale of Conscience*.

In one of her letters to Mrs. Grehan Fanny gives us a glimpse of the daily life of Miss Agnew's Community—

"I had leave to make a mild sort of diluted three days retreat (at 'London Abbey'), and I enjoyed the solitude above everything. But the most delicious part was, of course, the Perpetual Adoration, which, as yet, they can only keep up from one till eight, each nun, novice, and lay-sister taking half an hour. While I was there I went from eight till nine in the evening. I never shall forget the entrancing effect of the nuns' sweet voices in the choir all together singing *O Salutaris*, and

¹ See p. 334, Appendix, Note 4.

the last 'All praise,' etc., which closed the adoration of the day. They cultivate music with particular care; they all seem to have tolerable voices, and with Miss Agnew and Miss Caroline Agnew to lead them you may imagine that the singing is not at all of a common order. They chant all the Little Hours, Vespers, and sometimes Compline, and it is in the Constitutions that they should have Benediction every day and music during one Mass. As yet they have no regular chaplain, and while I was there we had no Mass on week-days, which was a great privation, as the solitaries are allowed to go to Communion every day. They are in a much better state with regard to funds than in the 'debt or starvation' days. Miss A. told me herself that the Institute would be always struggling while she lived, but would flourish after her death. She spoke very openly about the Order; told me how every step she had taken since she left Bermondsey was with the view of founding it, and she explained to me all its aims and ends. It is wonderful how extremely easy it is—*solitude* is *absolutely* the only austerity, except to be sure that they do abstain on Wednesdays and take the discipline on Fridays. She says that solitude and silence seem to be the austerities God has peculiarly marked out for English women. Then it is by no means to consist entirely of prayer; the solitaries are supposed to be highly educated—they may pursue their studies, learn languages, write, draw, paint, copy music, embroider, always, of course, for the glory of God and the good of the Church. On all Sundays and feasts of obligation and devotion, they have meals in the refectory and talk at recreation; on other days they preserve perpetual silence and take their food in their cells. At present every one there wishes to be a solitary, except Miss C. Agnew, but they all, except the two Professed (Rev'd. Mother and Mother Prioress) take the active duties until they get some Handmaids. They seem to be doing a great deal of good; they have a poor school and visit a number of the St. George's poor. There are four novices and one postulant, besides a number of lay sisters; Rev'd. Mother is Mistress of Novices, so she is with them every day at recreation. She is just the same fascinating Miss Agnew that she ever was, with very nearly as much romance, and, of course, with ever-increasing sanctity. Her order is most wondrous, but I could not give myself up to so intensely unpractical a person. Super-

naturalness one would look for and wish to see, but her imagination is rather too much for me. I do not mean to say that the Constitutions are unpractical. I haven't the least idea what such things ought to be, but so far as I can judge they seem full of much sense and wisdom. Still there is something about it all which I cannot have confidence in, and which returns upon me twofold when I think of 'Rome and the Abbey.' "

In a letter written in January, 1850, Fanny tells Mrs. Grehan that she has been to confession several times to Father Knox of the Oratory, and likes him very much. Annie had also placed herself under the direction of another Oratorian, Father Dalgairns, a choice which was highly approved by Father de Buggenoms.

A projected visit to Trèves gave Fanny hope of meeting Pauline de Séneval, to whom she writes :

" *May 5, 1850.*

" How can I thank you enough for the letter you have just written me? I hardly know why it is that I have not written. I had constantly intended doing so, until I heard through Mrs. Gambini that you had left Valence, and then I could not discover where you were.

" I am so sorry to hear of all the trouble you have had, especially of your poor Father's illness. . . . Do you know, that in about a fortnight I shall be a good deal nearer to you than I am now? We are going to make a little tour into Germany as far as Trèves. I have been trying very hard to persuade Papa to go to Langres, but he says he has too little time to spare. Do you not think you could come to Trèves? I will not promise you that I shall not carry you back to England with me, if once I have you in my possession! I must tell you why we are going to Trèves. Two years ago, when our great Church of St. George was opened, a number of foreign bishops came to be present at the ceremony, and they were received in different Catholic families. The Bishop of Trèves with his two chaplains stayed for a week in our house, and we became such friends with him that he made Papa promise to take us to see him some day. Ever since he has been constantly writing to remind us, so Papa has determined to go

this year. There is to be a great fête and jubilee at Bruges next year. Annie and Monica are already there with my brother Edward, staying with my aunt, Mrs. Grehan. Papa and I are going in a few days. We shall stay a short time in Bruges, and then all proceed together to Trèves. We expect to arrive there about this day fortnight, and I daresay we shall stop there a week or ten days. If there is a hope of seeing you, write to me at Bruges. I shall pray so hard that we may meet.

"We are all quite well now, thank God, but I must tell you that my dear brother Edward has had an illness of a whole year, and we feared very much that he would never entirely recover. He had some disease in his leg which made him unable to walk, and for many months he never left his bed. At last we took him to Brighton, and there God was so good as to restore him perfectly, so that he came home quite well in the month of October last year.

"None of us have got married yet, but I think there will be one or two nuns in our family. I must tell you about it next time I write. There will be a wedding at Bromley before long; you will guess it is Catherine. . . . Oh! what a joy if we are to meet! I shall expect a letter at Bruges. Papa sends his love to his *daughter* Pauline."

Monica's visit to Bruges was one of farewell. This child of seventeen had a particularly gentle and lovable disposition, so that her father often said half-jestingly, half-seriously, to his other children, "I do not mind if you all go, provided Monica is left to me." But this was precisely the sacrifice that was asked of him. When Monica convinced her father that God really wanted her, he put no obstacle in her way, for, if with her to *know* was to act, and to act promptly, with him to *believe* was to act, and to act generously.

The following letter shows with what care Father Faber guarded the innocent soul of Monica Lescher—

"*The Oratory,*
"June 7, 1850.

"MY DEAR CHILD IN JESUS CHRIST,

"I hope I may be able to advise you aright. It really seems so plain that your vocation is to the religious

life that I do not like your continuing to live in the world longer than your father would wish it, since he has consented to your desire. Neither do I think it would be too much to ask of him to let you go on the Octave of the Assumption. You have come back from your journey, and your vocation has so stood another test. And what can I do for you now? Nothing, but set you to live a half-conventual life in the world. And this is only child's play. No! the sooner you are beneath the shelter of holy obedience and a regular system, the better. Let the Spouse of your soul have the freshness of your vocation for Himself.

"Next, as to Convent; I do not see, on reconsidering it, any need of better search. Let it be Winchester, and take it on obedience, and so your mind will be easy. Last of all, do not do as some do, pay visits, go to parties, bid good-byes; but keep quiet and with your own family. Live with them with all the detached affection of one about to die; and let what natural affection there is to be shown be shown to your father chiefly; for his is, in one sense, a greater sacrifice than yours.

"You are in my memento every day at Mass, and you must not forget me in your prayers, for I need every one's prayers far more than people suppose. May God and our dear Lady and St. Philip bless you.

"Ever most sincerely yours in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary,
"FREDERICK W. FABER, Congr. Oratory."

Fanny escorted Monica to the Benedictine Convent at Winchester on the 5th of August, Feast of Our Lady of the Snows. In the same railway carriage was a young naval lieutenant (afterwards Father Walter Strickland, S.J.), whose presence deprived the sisters of a confidential chat. Their hearts were too full to discuss trivial matters, so Fanny sat in silent sorrow whilst Monica read the *Imitation of Christ*.

The approaching marriage of Kate Pitchford with Mr. Palmer forms the main theme of a letter to Mrs. Grehan—

(FRANCES LESCHER to FANNY GREHAN)

"July 12, 1850.

"I wonder how I have existed all this time without writing to you. I know I feel as if I could not any longer,

and so, in spite of all sorts of important duties—of raspberry jam waiting to be brandied, of accounts to be settled, and commissions to be done, and divers other acts of solid virtue—I sit down determined upon one hour's pleasure. I don't know how it is, but I never feel with you as with other people—a sort of restraint after two or three months' silence and a half-doubt whether they are just the same as they were, just as warm and fresh and enthusiastic and just as interested about all I am likely to say to them. If you had a hundred children and lived in the wilds of Siberia, my dearest Fanny, I should always feel you were the same to me as in the happy days of our first and earliest sympathies. What volumes I should have to say to you if I had you here! I must try and condense my ideas into something like a decent number of sheets of note-paper, though it is a consolation to reflect that you are acquainted with Mr. Palmer's views of epistolary correspondence. I suppose you are as happy as we all are about dearest Catherine. It has come as such a matter of course that I seem to settle down into a calm acquiescence, and almost forget the very joy that it is. But surely there never was anything (as far as we poor mortals can see) more pleasant, more satisfactory, more right in every way, than that Catherine and Mr. Palmer should be engaged. He is so good, that I think I must almost allow that he deserves her, though I confess it is a stretch, for he cannot know yet what a wife she will be. . . .

“I have been for this last two days at Hampstead with poor Aunt Sidney, and last night saw her and her children off in the Ostend boat. She is very low, for, apart from everything else, it is a great trial to her to leave her home. I have great hopes from the waters for Uncle Sidney, especially as Dalrymple is so sanguine about him. But it is always a sad thing to leave one's home and country in search of health.”

Several pages of this letter are missing; probably they contained confidences concerning Fanny's future, for she was as yet undecided as to whether she was called to the active or the contemplative life. Father Knox considered that she was temperamentally suited to the latter, and in her visits to Winchester she often spoke of a certain convent in Italy, where he wished her to try her vocation. But it may have

been that the active philanthropy at St. Anne's had given her pause, as it had done in the case of Mrs. Edward Petre, now a novice with the Sisters of Notre Dame. That Frances Lescher ever seriously contemplated entering at St. Anne's we have no evidence to prove, but she was a constant visitor there, and held Miss Prestwich in the highest esteem. The letter above quoted resumes :

"Father Knox would not let me go to make a retreat at St. Anne's the last time I mentioned it to him; I believe because he thinks Father de Buggenom's views about me are rather different from his.

"I saw our beloved Mother (Miss Prestwich) a short time ago. I suppose you know she is going to have a school in town under the superintendence of the Oratorians. She has asked me to go and help. . . .

"We are in distress at the rumours which are flying about concerning Dr. Wiseman. It is quite certain that he is to go to Rome next month; some say he is to be made Cardinal and stay there, and that Dr. Ullathorne is to come to London, but I do not believe it is true."

The visit to Trèves earlier in the year is described in a letter to Pauline de Sénéval, dated September 28, 1850—

"You have not, I trust, thought that I had forgotten you again. I confess I have been silent much longer than I intended, but I have had so much to do and to think of this summer that I have hardly ever had time to write anything like a long letter. First, I must tell you we had a most delightful voyage. We went, you know, to Bruges, where I got your nice letter, and proceeded by Aix-la-Chapelle to Trèves. There we enjoyed ourselves most completely. Directly the good Bishop heard of our arrival, he insisted that we should all leave the hotel and be lodged at the *Evêché*. So we had a beautiful suite of apartments there, and the Bishop's niece, who lives with him and is a very nice girl, was our hostess, and we took all our meals with Monseigneur himself. Then he used to take us out in his carriage to see the country round Trèves, and he did everything that was possible to make our visit agreeable to us. We stayed about a week, and, when

we left, one of the priests, who was a great friend of ours, and Mme. Brosins, Monseigneur's niece, came with us down the Moselle and upon the Rhine as far as Mayence. We spent the *Fête-Dieu* at Coblenz, where we were much pleased with the procession of the Blessed Sacrament. We returned home by Bruges and Ostend. I could not persuade Papa to go by France; it would have been so much longer and more expensive, but I cannot tell you how often I thought of you, *ma chère petite*, when I seemed so near you, and how very much I wished it had been possible for me to meet you at Metz or Nancy. I expect our next meeting, dear Pauline, will be where our parting was, in England, and you will come some day and stay a long, long time with your own old friend, who loves you still as dearly as she did in those happy days at Stratford. I am very desirous to know how your dear Papa is; I was so distressed to hear of his continued illness. Have you been with him all the summer?

"I think I told you in my last letter that Monica intended becoming a nun. The dear child has now left us, and she is Sister Margaret Mary in the Benedictine Convent at Winchester. It was a great trial to us all when she went, and Papa felt it very much, but we could not doubt that God called her to a religious life, and she would not have been happy in the world. I took her to the Convent, and she put on the habit on the Eve of the Assumption. Miss Nyren and Mrs. Gambini saw her the other day, and they say she looks so pretty and full of joy. You know it is the same convent where Aunt Caroline is a nun, and where, too, Agnes is still at school. They are all so fond of Monica there—it is more like home than anything else. We are to lose another member of our family next week, and then there will be only Annie and I alone with Papa. Our dear brother Edward, who has always been with Papa at his *bureau*, has made up his mind to enter the Church and be a priest. He is going to the College of Oscott, near Birmingham, to commence his studies next Wednesday. It is such a privilege to have a brother a priest, that we can scarcely feel unhappy at his going; but I do not know what we shall do without him—he has always been such a dear useful brother to us, and so very amiable and good. The College is not very far off, so I hope he will often come home and see us."

Mrs. Grehan was unable to come to London for her sister's wedding, but Fanny with her quick observation and pleasant humour sends her an account of the function.

(TO FANNY GREHAN)

"I suppose you are waiting for another letter from me before you reply to my last. I remember I rashly promised to write after the wedding, and if it were only for the selfish motive of hearing from you I must manage to keep my word. We had hoped to have Caroleen with us before now, but this attack of John Henry¹ has kept her at home. I was very glad, however, to find by her account last night that he was getting so much better, and going on quite favourably now. I don't imagine they have left me much to tell about the wedding. I hope they made you realise what a very charming affair it was, and how particularly well everything went off. Katherine looked so very nice; her dress was perfect, and I never saw a bride dressed more completely to my taste. Of the bridesmaids it does not become me to speak; but surely none save a bachelor so ruthless as Mr. Edward Palmer could have resisted the attractions of those nymph-like forms in white and lilac flitting about the glades. I sat by that hardened individual at breakfast, and failed to elicit any sparks of human feeling from him except upon the subject of the game pie and pine-apple cream. It is a melancholy fact that he was more intent upon investigating the extracted corks of the champagne bottles than the crape bonnets of the bridesmaids. Zouch behaved with the usual heroism which bridegrooms are always so remarkable for, and which always seems to excite so much astonishment and admiration in the beholders. His speech, by the way, was quite out of the common—clever and prettily turned. It would be useless to describe the appearance of that merry breakfast-table or the effect of each 'wedding-guest'; it must be so easy for you to imagine where everybody sat and what everybody looked like: Cousin Caroline, of course, between the two members of the medical profession, Dr. Ansell and Mr. Vickers, whose end of the table was far the noisiest, and who kept proposing perpetual toasts; Mr. Shattock taking care of old Mrs. Palmer; Mrs. Hall looking elegant and romantic

¹ The youngest of the Pitchford boys.

in her China crape embroidered shawl; Richard sitting between Annie and me, feeling distressed as he always does to see lovely 'wummen' in a state of hunger; Papa devoting himself to Mrs. Vickers; Alfred enjoying himself with Mary Brown, etc., etc. Well! it was very nice to see dearest Kate married, but I must confess I am tired of weddings. They make me melancholy now, for I cannot help thinking of poor dear Anastasia. Such a joyous bride as she was, too! Her happiness might have been thought too cloudless to last! Poor Kate did not look very joyous when she went off; I did not think she would have cried so much. But it was a happy home to leave, and there were so many to say good-bye to. Caroleen's first burst of grief was very distressing. She had borne up so beautifully all the morning that it was not wonderful that her pent-up feelings could be no longer restrained. But I think it did her good, and before Annie and I left in the evening she was quite calm again. I hope we shall soon have her here and make her as happy as we can. I heard something of a project for the bride and bridegroom to pay you a visit in Ireland. Is it going to be put in execution? I must return to the wedding for one moment to tell you how very sweet your little Alice¹ looked, and how much notice she attracted in her pretty white dress and cerise ribbons. She is really a most precious piquant mite—everybody seemed struck with her.

"Our circle at Nottingham Place gets smaller every day. Willie is gone back to the North to a Mr. Watson in Cumberland—a very practical sort of a farmer, it seems, with whom he is to spend the winter. Arthur returns to Stonyhurst next week, and before very long we are, I believe, to lose our dear Edward. He is going to make a retreat with the Jesuits either at Stonyhurst or Tunbridge, but I think the question of his vocation is already decided, and he intends to try to be a secular priest at Oscott. Mr. Moore does not consider his deafness an insurmountable obstacle, and is very anxious that he should try. So there seems every chance that one of my great wishes will be fulfilled, and I shall have a brother a priest. I am sure I thank God and our dearest Lady most gratefully for it, and I ought not to complain of the sacrifice, when the gain is so great. But no one that does not know Edward as we know him, can tell what a dear, precious boy he is, or what

¹ Mrs. Grehan's third child.



ANNIE LESCHER, Aged 22 Years.
(Copied from a miniature).

a loss he will be to us. Pray for him, dearest Fanny, that he may succeed, if it be God's will. . . .

"We heard from Ems to-day; Uncle Sidney is getting slowly better. They talk of wintering in Boulogne."

On November 12, 1850, Fanny writes to Pauline de Séneval to sympathise with her in the death of her father, and the necessity it puts her under of again leaving home to earn her living. One reticent line in the letter hints at the great cross that was hanging over her:

"You must not forget that you have a home in Nottingham Place, where your *Papa Lescher* will give you a daughter's welcome. You must come straight to our house and stay with us as long as you can. Think what a pleasure it will be to be together again, and how we shall talk over all that has happened since we parted. We will comfort each other, will we not, dear? for I have sorrows, too, which I will tell you about some day."

And now the character of the letter changes; the laughter has died away, and we feel that the writer's soul, chastened by the greatest sorrow of this part of her life, has grown—in gravity, in calm, in strength, in light. For Annie is leaving her at last. She had known it long, but a grief expected is other than a grief consummated; the affection and pain of her heart are felt along the pages.

With her grace and good looks, her brightness, her loving disposition, Annie had been much wooed by the world; she would have been won by it but for her soul's deep and secure anchorage in realities. Sure of her call, she yet hovered for some time before her feet found their resting-place in the peace of God's will, beneath Our Lady's mantle.

Her own *attrait* was to a life of exclusive penance and contemplation, and she leaned to the Carmelites or Poor Clares. She disliked the idea of teaching the young—especially the children of the well-to-do. But

There's a Divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.

Father Faber addressed her for the final decision of her vocation to the saintly Redemptorist, Father Lans, who, however, was not fixed in London. After many hesitations for fear he should send her to the Institute of Notre Dame,

she placed herself under the direction of Father de Buggenoms, and began a novena of prayers and communions before the Feast of St. Michael, who had already twice folded his wings round members of her family, to know God's Will in her regard. At its close she went to seek her answer in the Church of the Redemptorists. "Go and offer yourself to the Sisters of Notre Dame," said her confessor. At once all vacillation ceased, and at the word of obedience she sacrificed with complete generosity her tastes and her repugnances.

(ANNIE LESCHER to PAULINE DE SÉNEVAL)

"Thank you for your sweet letter. You may be sure I do sympathise with you very truly in all your sorrows, and am quite ready to do everything to lighten them, and to receive you with a sister's love.

"But I am afraid I shall not be able to do this last except in spirit, as I am going to follow Monica's example. By the Feast of the Immaculate Conception I shall be in my Convent—the Sisters of Notre Dame at Namur, but after the noviceship I expect to come again to England, as they have two houses in this country; so then, dearest, I shall be able to see you again, if God wills it. In the meantime you will be more than ever a sister to dearest Fanny. She has made inquiries for some situation for you, and I hope she will be able to hear of something soon.

"How sad it will be for you, *chère petite*, to leave your dear mother; I feel so sorry for her, as I already love her from your description. You must tell her from us that you have a friend in England who will love you and take care of you. How is dear Adelaide? You must give her our love and ask her to pray for us. Do you know that our brother Edward is now studying to be a priest? Is it not a happy thing for us and for him too? I have prayed often for your father, dearest, as you asked me, and I hope I may have obtained him relief if he needed it. You must never forget me, dear Pauline, in your prayers—I will always pray for you.

"I send you much love from Fanny and remain,

"Your very affectionate friend,

"ANNIE LESCHER."

How the sword of sorrow of separation from her beloved

sister pierced the heart of Frances Lescher may be partly learned from the following letter to Mrs. Grehan—

“ November 29, 1850.

“ In the selfishness of my own sorrow I have neglected, I will not say I have forgotten, to tell you how glad I was to hear of the addition of another gem to the crown which is to be yours when you are ‘ the joyful mother of many children ’ in heaven. You have heard from Bromley, of course, about Annie’s approaching departure, and if any one on earth could know, I think you perhaps could guess something of what it is to me to lose her. I cannot tell you all about it now—later you shall hear all—but I could not bear it to happen without saying a few words to you, who have been so dear a friend to me, and who can help me so much with your prayers. My dearest Fanny, you know there can be no earthly comfort, and perhaps it is a good thing to be obliged to feel this, and to be forced to go nowhere but to the foot of the Cross. So you will think of me there, and pray for me to that dear Mother by whose feet I kneel with all the more confidence because I shall have given into her gentle keeping all I hold dearest on earth, on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. We leave on Thursday—Papa and I go with her, you know, and shall reach Namur by Saturday. Annie is quite content to go to the Sisters of Notre Dame as she acts so entirely under obedience to Fr. de Buggenoms, though the first wish of her heart lately had always been to be a Carmelite. Father de Buggenoms does not speak with certainty about her vocation, but he is convinced she ought to try. Humanly speaking, I often think she cannot stay, but supernaturally speaking, I have a sort of conviction that she will. Whichever way it happen, there is nothing for me to do but to give her up entirely now, and leave the rest to God. Ask for me, dearest, that I may have courage when the time comes, for I can scarcely realise our parting yet. Father Knox, as you may imagine, has been the greatest help to me, and I cannot tell you what untiring kindness and sympathy he has shown me, for he knows what sorrow and suffering are. I will not weary you with anything more about myself except to beg of you once again to pray often for me and for us both. Annie sends you her dearest love. She will remember you and yours always in her prayers.”

CHAPTER VI

LONELINESS

"Thrice blessed are they who feel their loneliness."—J. H. NEWMAN.

LONELINESS is the price one has to pay for one's individuality; and in proportion to the strength of that individuality will be the measure of the agony of loneliness which, at some period or other of life, one must endure. Affection deep and faithful was one of the strongest traits in Frances Mary Lescher's character, and on no one was it more prodigally bestowed than on her sister Annie. Yet when the hour of parting had come and gone, Fanny, with that courage and resignation which are the hall-mark of a great and good love, shouldered her cross bravely all through the Christmastide and the long spring. The old life had to be lived again, the old routine of domestic duties, charitable works, and social amenities resumed. Agnes was at home now, and the task of superintending her education came as a welcome relief to the elder sister.

But Annie was always in her thought and prayer. She wrote to her constantly, and sent her copious notes of Father Faber's sermons—*Shepherds at the Crib*; a Lenten course on *Devotion to the Sacred Humanity*; a course for *Beginners in the Spiritual Life*; and a series of May sermons on *Mary in the Modern Church*—are among the entries in her note-book.

Let her tell us in her own words the bitter-sweets of these days when God was training and fashioning her in the hard school of detachment. In July she went with her father and sister to Great Marlow in Buckinghamshire, where her brother Willie was trying his hand at farming on the estate of Mr. Scott-Murray.

(TO MRS. GREHAN)

"Great Marlow, Bucks,
July 21, 1851.

"If I did not love you so much and so very dearly, I should be ashamed to write to you after a silence of so many months.

I am not sure whether I was not ashamed for a little while, and whether I did not put off writing several times because I scarcely knew how to excuse myself to you. I have a whole sheet still in my desk which I filled with the intention of sending last February. I don't know how it is, but there was so much to say, and so much too about myself, that I seemed as if I never could get to the end of it all. How often would I have given worlds to talk to you. My dearest Fanny, I cannot afford to lose the sympathy and affection that has always been such a happiness to me. You must let me claim it back again now, if my own apparent coldness has caused it to be withdrawn, and you must not think that I have ever for a single moment loved you less than I really always have, and always shall love you. People must often have thought me cold, I am afraid, since Annie went. The fact is, I believe I have not cared for them quite in the way I used to do; there was such a distance between my love for Annie and my love for everybody else that, as I always said, when she went there could be no earthly comfort. And there was none. Do not think, though, that I would have had it otherwise; the great grace of our parting (to me, at least), is that there has been no consolation for either of us anywhere but in the sweet Heart of Jesus. It has changed my life, of course, utterly and entirely. I could not believe how utterly if I had been told before. I do not mean, you know, that it has made me better exactly, but it has given me altogether different views. How strange it is that one great cross should open one's eyes so wonderfully. You have heard, no doubt, how perfectly happy dearest Annie is. You have no idea what beautiful letters she writes me, and how peaceful and holy and almost seraphic her life seems to be. She is allowed to write constantly, and she tells me all about herself and everything she does so naturally that we are together still in spirit as much as it is possible to be. I am to see her so very soon now, as you know—about the second week in August. I believe Aunt Grehan goes, and I hope that Celia and I may be able to stay a fortnight in the convent. It is certainly the most perfect convent I ever saw, and the nuns the very nicest. They are so simple and natural, and so full of charity. It seems to suit Annie in everything, even the active duties that she used to dislike so much before she went. I think she has been rewarded for giving up her

own will so completely about it. Father de Buggenoms was there the other day, and he told her she had received many graces since she had been there. Certainly he may well be satisfied with her vocation.

"I saw Miss Prestwich at St. Anne's just before Annie went. I told her of my troubles and then she told me of hers. I shall always love her very much and feel the greatest gratitude for the help she once was to me. The last time I saw her was in Lent at Colby House, and she was very kind to me then. I had a little note from her a few weeks ago, at the time they were being so persecuted. How gloriously it has all ended for them.¹

"I cannot express the help that Father Knox has been to me all this dreary six months. I never could have expected so much sympathy and kindness and such unwearied watchfulness and care. The greatest pleasure I have now is reading spiritual books, and I certainly have had very great enjoyment of this kind lately. I do not know whether you have ever read the works of St. Teresa and her *Life* by herself; it is the most delicious book and has been like coming upon a new world to me. The favourite Oratory books, though, are Surin's works. I think you have got some of them, but his *Dialogues Spirituels* and his *Letters* are the most wonderful things almost that I ever read. I sometimes think that you might perhaps like to see some notes I wrote of the Conferences Father Faber gave last Lent upon the Spiritual life. The notes are rather long as I wrote them on purpose for dear Annie, and there are some useful things in them. If you should ever fancy reading them I will send them to you by post. There are so many things, my darling Fanny, that I should like to talk to you about—spiritual things as well as temporal things, I mean. I hope you will write to me if you can think it worth your while, for I am sure I do not deserve it, and tell me all about yourself and your work; I hear from Bromley that you are doing great things for a poor school. We remain at this place about a fortnight longer, I believe, and I hope Aunt Grehan and Celia will come before we leave, and then we shall all go back to Nottingham Place together. Papa is, I trust, quite well now; you can scarcely imagine how very ill he was at one time. I can never forget, I think, the trials of this last

¹ See letter to Mrs. Grehan, p. 83.

six months. Agnes is at home now and is a very dear girl. She is so good. I dare say she will be a nun too. My time, of course, is a good deal occupied in superintending her studies. She is very intelligent and studious, but rather backward, it seems to me, in her education, and I cannot quite make it out. Edward has been spending the last three weeks with us; he is now in minor orders, wears his tonsure, and looks quite the priest. At this present moment he is making a retreat at Mount St. Bernard in Leicestershire, principally in order to find out whether he ought to be a religious or a secular priest. I am afraid it would be a trial to me if he were to become a religious; it would make a great difference, you know, and we had looked forward to his being settled in London—but God's will be done. Pray for him, please, this week. Arthur writes us word that he has quite made up his mind to be a Jesuit. However, he is coming home for the holidays, and then we shall see.

"I spent two very happy days at Winchester when I brought Agnes away. It was the first time I had seen darling Monica in the habit; she is the very *beau ideal* of a happy novice.

"We enjoy the peace and solitude of this place very much and the Church is the greatest comfort. What should we do without the Blessed Sacrament, and what can any troubles be while we have that! We can go to the Church whenever we like; it opens with the *Angelus* at six every morning, and Mass is at seven. There is a charming priest here—quite a young convert—whom we like extremely."

It is strange that Fanny does not give the name of this priest, for Mrs. Grehan, always abreast of current Catholic life, must certainly have known by repute the pioneer of the Cambridge converts, Father John Morris, who was, perhaps, indirectly instrumental in bringing after him into the Catholic Church, his tutor, Professor Paley.

In 1898, a very few days before his beautiful, if tragic, death in the pulpit at Wimbledon, Father John Morris, S.J., wrote in affectionate remembrance of those summer days when he numbered the Leschers among his flock:

"Sister Mary of St. Philip came to Marlow when I was there, on two different occasions, staying with her father and sister

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for some weeks at a time. Arthur was with me as a pupil, if I remember rightly, for some months. He died in Canada, and the immense concourse that attended his funeral showed what a hold his bright, cheery ways and generous disposition had taken on the affections of the many people who knew him. The eldest son took the home farm at Danesfield for some years, but he was no exception to the rule that gentlemen farmers cannot make farming pay.

"I saw a great deal of them while they stayed at Marlow. At one time they lived in a charming inn by the water side. I remember one Sunday leaving them to go to the afternoon service in the Church, and being surprised at their non-appearance. Afterwards I found that the boat in which they crossed, or were to have crossed, the river, had upset and given them an involuntary bath. Miss Pope, the school-mistress, went overboard, and on rising to the surface caught hold of the boat. . . .

"That which I remember with the greatest pleasure was reading aloud to them the first of Cardinal Newman's Birmingham Lectures. I can still recall the bright interest that Miss Fanny Lescher took in 'The lion did not draw the lion, but the man drew him,' and, again, the Russian meeting to denounce John Bullism with which the wonderful lecture concludes.

"I feel I could spend a very charming half hour in recalling to her memory those pleasant Marlow days. I am sorry that I cannot expect so delightful a recreation."

(FANNY LESCHER to FANNY GREHAN)

*"Great Marlow, Bucks,
"Monday, July 28, 1851.*

"Your precious letter has just been brought in, and I cannot let a post pass without sending some sort of an answer to it. It has given me so much pleasure that I am almost surprised to find how utterly undetached I am from the blessing which your friendship is to me. I scarcely know how it is, but, if we have been ever so separated and far apart, we seem to understand and sympathise with one another again just as if we had lived together all the time. It is a great comfort to feel this invisible tie always connecting us, and it is a greater comfort still to think how perfectly united we may be in the

Sacred Heart of Jesus, where we have both of us placed all our hopes and fears, and cares and sorrows, and where we can meet so often and help each other by our prayers. Annie and I have a practice for meeting in the Sacred Heart every day at nine and four, which, I believe, are the hours for all the *Associés du Sacré Cœur*. Will you come too? We only say *Loué soit le Sacré Cœur—Ainsi soit-il*. I am sorry I did not tell you more about Namur when I wrote, but I thought you must have heard it all by this time. I am delighted to send you the Conferences . . . you can keep them as long as you like, at all events until I come back from Belgium. I advise you to read them before you make your retreat. They are rather dry for Father Faber, but then, you know, I took notes merely of the essential parts, and they are only *conferences* after all—not at all like sermons or meditations; but I think they give one a good many views and plans for one's life.

"The story of the Prestwichian triumph is simply this: Their landlord at Colby House was Archdeacon Sinclair, and he did all he could to get rid of them through motives of bigotry. When they were turned out, some Catholic gentleman (I have not heard the name, but I imagine Lord Arundel and Surrey) came forward, and bought a house which they occupy as his tenants, and for which they pay him some low rent. The house is a better one than their last, and happens most curiously to be next door to where Archdeacon Sinclair lives. They overlook his garden, and he cannot help hearing their *Angelus* bell.

"I am so much interested in your school, and will find out all I can about the sort of confraternity you want for it. I think Annie might tell me of something they have at Namur."

(TO THE SAME)

"16 Nottingham Place,
"Saturday, August 9, 1851.

"I have sent you Surin's *Dialogues*, which I hope will remind you to pray for me sometimes. I am longing to hear how you get on with your retreat; pray write to me as soon as you can. We came home last Thursday evening. I am now expecting Aunt Grehan and Celia every minute; the former goes to Winchester on Monday and the latter to Bromley; they return to us on the 19th or 20th. Our family party is rather

larger than usual just now, Edward and Arthur both being at home. I am happy to say that Edward returned home quite safe from Mount St. Bernard, and I think his Cistercian vocation is not at all increased by his visit there, and Father Sisk's rather dry retreat. He has had an interview with Father de Buggenoms since he came back which pleased him very much. Father de Buggenoms recommended his going back to Oscott for the present, and thought the Cistercians not at all likely to suit him. I should like to know something about that association of the Ushaw priests. Edward is rather inclined to be a secular if he could go to St. Sulpice, or have anything like a noviceship to begin with, but dreads being sent out upon the mission as his own master the moment he is ordained.

"Our last fortnight at Marlow was very pleasant. Some of the Northampton nuns are staying there for change of air.¹ The Mistress of Novices is a Belgian, and a very sweet creature; I used to have such nice talks with her. We miss Mr. Morris, too, very much; before I came away he put me into the Third Order of St. Francis with a great function. I hope to go to Bromley and see Kate before I leave England."

More than ever now Frances Lescher gave herself to a life of steady prayer and works of mercy. She made it a rule to say every day, besides the ordinary Rosary, that of the Seven Dolours, and Agnes tells us of her own vain endeavours to get her sister to bed because she would remain on her *prie-dieu* saying long prayers till Agnes often fell asleep. In this year, 1851, on November 21st—that Feast of Our Lady which enshrined such a precious memory for the Lescher family, and which, in the following year was to witness her Annie's religious profession—she made, in the hands of her director a temporary vow of chastity, which she renewed on the following Corpus Christi for a longer period. On the feast of St. Aloysius, 1853, it was taken absolutely and for ever. It was found after her death written on a little worn half-sheet of paper, and signed with her blood.

We have already spoken of the great friendship which existed between the Leschers and Mr. Scott Nasmyth Stokes

¹ Sisters of a Congregation of the Infant Jesus, which was ultimately incorporated into that of Notre Dame.

and his wife—" Brother Nasmyth " ¹ and " Sister Emma " as they were styled by the sisters.

Mr. Stokes greatly appreciated Fanny's rare gifts of mind and heart; he frequently discussed his educational ideals and plans with her, and their conversation must often have turned on their common interest in Catholic schools for the poor. In 1847 the Vicars Apostolic of England had nominated the members of the Catholic Poor School Committee, Scott Nasmyth Stokes being appointed secretary. One of the first cares of the Committee was to found a Catholic Training College for school-masters, and it fell to the task of Mr. Stokes to open correspondence with the Abbé J. M. de Lamennais,² whose congregation—The Brothers of Christian Instruction—was to undertake its direction. This Institute was founded in 1817 by the Abbé de Lamennais to supply the benefits of Christian teaching in country districts too poor to secure the services of the Brothers of the Christian Schools of St. Jean Baptiste de la Salle, who were not allowed to work singly. For forty years this holy priest attracted and trained recruits for his work, guided them in their teaching, and opened many schools. Mr. Stokes visited the headquarters of the Institution at Ploërmel, and when the batch of English youths returned from thence after their religious formation, it was he who assisted the infant Brotherhood, and to him were entrusted the arrangements of the needful alterations in Brook Green House, Hammersmith, to dispose it for a Normal College. Mr. Stokes, therefore, went to live at Shepherd's Bush, and for office used a room in Brook Green House. Did he then already dream and pray that his " Sister Fanny " might pioneer a similar work for Catholic women-teachers? Perhaps God, at any rate, had not brought together for nought Scott Nasmyth Stokes, Thomas William Allies, and Frances Mary Lescher.

(FANNY LESCHER to MR. STOKES)

" 1851.

" I send you the translation of your Father's letter; I am never too busy to write your letters, so don't think they could ever trouble me.

¹ Mr. Stokes was a member of the Congregation of the Little Brothers of the Oratory.

² Brother to the Abbé Félix de Lamennais of *L'Avenir* fame.

"I am so much obliged to you for the reward you gave me by letting me read Fr. Hutchinson's manifesto.¹ I like it so very much. I wanted particularly to know the Oratorian view about the meeting, because Mr. Amherst and Mr. Wallis had been declaiming so, that I began to feel rather weak, and to feel that my view was low. But I am delighted to find I have such good authority. I send you back the letter, and will take care not to propound its contents out-of-doors as Father Hutchinson says. . . .

"I had such a nice letter from dearest Annie this morning. She must have written it just before she got mine, for she did not know the news. She sent her love, and said she often offered up her studies at 'St. Ignace'² for her Brother Nasmyth's school.

"Thank you for asking me not to be unhappy—do not say you have no business. Who should have a greater right than you and my dear sister Emma, who have helped so much to comfort me in my sorrow?"

(TO THE SAME)

"16 Nottingham Place,
"March 4, 1851.

"I kept this very interesting looking letter of yours in the hope that you might be drawn to visit us this evening on your way to the soirée. But as my hopes of seeing you generally end in disappointment, I will not delay any longer to forward it to you, and to give you at the same time a message I received from dearest Annie to-day. She says, 'I gave Brother Nasmyth's message to Sœur Marie de St. François (Mrs. E. Petre); she sends her thanks and is very much obliged. Then I read her what you said about inspection, etc., as she is much consulted about England. She is translating it into French that it may be considered of, and I am to give you an official answer next time—so say anything else you think of, or Brother Nasmyth thinks of. Sœur Marie de St. François wishes he would come and see us, and so do I—he might do wonders. But meanwhile I am commending it to the Holy Ghost; will you say the hymns for it sometimes, and ask Brother Nasmyth? It is of

¹ Against the advisability of a Catholic agitation concerning Government educational persecution.

² The class-room of the Novitiate.

no use talking to Sister Clarie (the Clapham Superior), but Reverend Mother-General will be in England in the summer, and something may be done then. At all events I am sure the Holy Ghost will guide her, for she does nothing without prayer and has no views that are not supernatural.'

"What a charming plan it would be if you could go to see them next August, when you go to Ploërmel. How it would please dear Annie! She is as well as ever, she says, but she tells me what I am very glad to hear, that they are not going to let her fast this Lent. She had not got dear Sister Emma's ¹ little note when she wrote. Will you thank her for writing it? I am longing to come to Shepherd's Bush, and think I must make a desperate effort at the end of this week, before we get thoroughly up to our ears in sermons."

It was in the beginning of 1852 that Fanny was stricken by the small-pox. One day there had come to the house in quest of charity a poor woman and her child, both suffering from the disease. She went to them, and later on took the child, still but partially recovered, for religious instruction. The result was as may be imagined, and Frances Lescher bore to the end of her life the honourable stigmata of her Christian charity.

(To MRS. GREHAN)

"Sunday, March 28, 1852.

"Your letter was as great a pleasure to me as your letters always are. My dearest, I often wonder how I came to deserve the comfort that your love and sympathy have ever been to me. I look forward to our meeting this summer as much as I dare look forward to anything now. Oh, Fanny dear, what a happiness it will be to be talking to you once more! Thank you for all your anxiety about me. I am quite well again now, and can scarcely believe I have had that horrid small-pox, except when I look at my face, which still tells a tale of the ravages which have been committed there. However, I believe the marks are all disappearing, and they tell me I shall have nothing left in the end. So I am afraid the effect upon my moral character will not be quite what the blessed Bishop Griffiths would have desired. I suppose you did not hear that Agnes had a kind of invisible small-pox (Mr. Gasquet

¹ Mrs. Stokes, the great friend of Annie Lescher.

thought) with her scarlet fever; so after the first fortnight she was allowed to come to me, which was an immense comfort. Her illness was of very short duration; she was well in three or four days and soon able to go down to Papa, or I don't know what the poor dear man would have done. I was very lonely at first, as you suppose, but very happy notwithstanding; it was the only time I ever felt glad that dearest Annie could not be with me, and I don't remember having felt so happy since she went as I did then. I did not in the least mind having the small-pox, which must have been all Our dear Lady's doing, because I used to have a great dread of it like Annie. My only trouble was the thought of her anxiety, but she knew nothing about it for a week, and by that time it was just beginning to turn. However, she was terribly distressed, poor, dear, dear child! She didn't know, she said, how undetached she was, and she could not help praying that I might not be marked. Do you know how it was that I got well so soon? It was through the intercession (as I really believe) of Blessed Sebastian Valfré, an Oratorian saint whose feast fell just when I was at the worst. Father Knox said Mass and prayed especially to him for me, and I can assure you when Mr. Gasquet came that day he was quite surprised to see how well I was. Papa says he expected secondary fever to come on, which would have been rather bad for me. Father Knox exulted exceedingly in Blessed Sebastian's *miracle*, and tried to make Papa believe it—which he resisted rather, on account, I think, of his not being in Alban Butler! No words can express the comfort my holy director was to me; he visited me so often, and even after I was downstairs used to come every week to hear my confession. He had the great kindness, too, to write to dear Annie of his own accord—while I was so troubled at not being able to write myself—and he gave her a minute account of me, because he thought it would comfort her to hear from some one who had seen me. I am sure I never can forget how kind so many people were. Poor dear Miss Bache used to come to the door every morning, often in tears, and that good Rev. Mr. Bamber sat and talked by my bedside regularly every day. And Father Brownbill too—he came up to me one day, and was so kind, and I felt so unworthy. Then there were some dear ladies from the Oratory who positively wanted to nurse me. They were converts and I know them very little;

but they had the small-pox themselves nearly two years ago just after they were taken into the Church. So they were full of sympathy for me and they used to sit with me very often. The relief of having somebody to talk to was incomparable while I could not see, and when the irritation of the disease began. I have entirely got back my strength now, and I am longing to be at home. We are to return on Thursday, and I hope to have a little spiritual enjoyment in Holy Week. I have been out of all the excitement, of course, and perhaps that is a good thing now and then; and then the place has not been quite destitute of advantages for one's soul. We are very near the convent chapel; it is open all day long, and there has generally been Benediction every evening, to which of late I have been able to go. I have rather enjoyed the quarantine and the peace which it has brought. I have been revelling in books. Father Knox always allows me *that* spiritual dissipation, I am happy to say, and he has lent me some very interesting ones lately. I am so glad you like Surin's *Catéchisme*. It always seemed to me the very perfection of a spiritual book, and I really think it is a special grace to read it. How it opens before one all the hidden workings of the interior life.

"I wanted very much to make a real retreat again, but I can't think where to go for it. Father Ferrara has just been preaching one at Miss Prestwich's. She wrote to me most kindly when I was ill, and they all made a novena for me. Her house seems now quite a nucleus of all manner of good works, meetings, societies and confraternities; in fact, they are doing, I should think, just the work for which they are meant—helping the poor wretches that are condemned to live in the world. Oh Fanny, I am afraid it is very wrong, but it does appear such an intensely *slow* thing to do good in the world. Not but what I can appreciate it when it is done by other people, and I love to hear of what you are doing with your poor people and your industrial school. What a happiness it will be for you to see that establishment succeeding, as I am sure it will.

"Pray for my intentions, dearest, as I will pray for yours, and think of me especially on Friday, the dear Feast of Our Lady's Dolours which I love so much and to which I owe so much . . ."

Monica Lescher, Dame Margaret Mary, made her religious profession in August 1852. The occasion brought her a characteristic letter from Father Faber:

(FATHER FABER to DAME MARGARET MARY)

"The Oratory,
"August 14, 1852.

"MY DEAR CHILD IN JESUS CHRIST,

"You may be sure I should have been most glad to have preached at your Profession, but I must be careful not to overdo myself again, and I have several preaching engagements as well as home duties. You may be sure I shall not forget you on Tuesday. You have been in my memento ever since you were my penitent. I suppose you think I shall give you a good scolding because you say you are not a saint. But you must be a saint before you have done. The dry crusts of Obedience are capital stuff for the spirit, however they disagree with the natural man. But I must have done. To-morrow I will tell my Madonna to look after you and put you a little further into the Sacred Heart. Oh, dear, how I wish I was a nun! You have the best of both worlds, while we are just enough in the discomfort of this world to run terrific odds of losing the next. Why is it that we are no better than we are? Because you nuns are so busy enjoying your own spiritual consolations that you do not pray enough for us poor folk outside the cloister. God bless you.

"Ever yours most sincerely in Jesus and Mary.

"F. W. FABER, Cong. Orator."

"P.S.—If I were a bishop—though I should be three-quarters of the way to a very bad place if I were—still, if I were one, how I would scold my nuns to make them pray. I would never let them rest till they were soaked through and through with devotion to the conversion of sinners."

After Annie had gone to Namur, Fanny paid frequent visits to the Sisters of Notre Dame at Clapham, drawn thither at first, perhaps, by love for her sister, though later, undoubtedly, by the spirit of simplicity and charity which were so conspicuous in these daughters of Blessed Julie Billiart. It is beyond the scope of this memoir to give any detailed account

of the Institute of Notre Dame, but we may say here that, even humanly speaking, Frances Lescher seemed made for it. Its mingled life of prayer and action, its love of the poor, the large and simple spirit inherited from its Foundress, all harmonised with her temperament and satisfied her aspirations. And now the mists and clouds of doubt and perplexity began to melt away, and the kindly light shed its beams on the straight path which was to bring her to the goal of her heart's desire. But the gate leading to that path seemed as yet firmly closed against her. "Not what I like but what I ought," words that later Sister Mary of St. Philip loved to give to her students as their motto, this was the rule of her own life from first to last. Severance from her almost twin sister had not been the whole pain of that parting; that was the sharp steel cut—the dull, leaden weight was the prospect before her, the sacrifice of her own sacrifice, the stretched out years of unselfish filial devotion; after which, in all likelihood, solitude, since of her own choice she had forgone the possibility of other ties and joys. Hers was a nature as true as it was sweet and strong; as a duty which lay before her was never blinked, so it was never skirted or flanked—she faced it unflinchingly, marched to it by the directest path, took it upon her shoulders wholly and uncompromisingly. Mr. Lescher, it would seem, guessed nothing either of her wish or the cause of its sacrifice. But one day there came to Fanny an offer of marriage which he had every reason for thinking she would accept, and he asked her the cause of her refusal. She told him simply that she would not leave him. But he answering, "I should be very glad to spare you, dear, for your own happiness," Fanny at once burst out, "Then, I wish to be a nun."

It is a wonderful and beautiful thing, looking back over the story of a soul, to see those occurrences which, when that soul was in their midst, were named chance or accident—to see these commonplaces as golden threads in the Hands of its Creator, and reverently to watch the divine wisdom sweetly and strongly disposing them, *a fine usque ad finem*, unto the complete weaving of a life-pattern. Nottingham Place, Miss Prestwich and St. Anne's Retreat, the sons of St. Philip, the sons of St. Alphonsus, the visit to Namur—by these things and others had God little by little shown Frances Lescher His ways for her, and taught her His paths. And if, as Dame Margaret

Mary tells us, she used at first in her visits to Winchester, "to talk of going to some wonderful contemplative Order in Italy, of which Father Knox had told her," that prior drawing to a life of prayer was all to the good for her apostolic vocation. Some of the finest of Our Lady's Sisters, from Mère Blin de Bourdon, first companion of their Foundress, to our own day, have lifted their eyes and heart to Carmel before finally fixing them on Notre Dame.

The simple record of the last months spent at home will be best given in Fanny's own words, eloquent in what they express, but more eloquent in what they leave unexpressed.

(FANNY LESCHER to FANNY GREHAN)

"16 Nottingham Place,
 "Tuesday morning,
 "Feast of St. Raphael, October 1852.

"I must just write two or three lines to wish you the farewell I cannot come to say. It was a great disappointment not to see you on Sunday, especially as I had little hope of being able to get to you yesterday and the weather rendered it doubly impossible. Well, dearest Fanny, though I cannot bear to think of your going away, and though our separation seems more complete than ever, yet I cannot help feeling also that we are more than ever united, too, and this I trust we always shall be—because our spirits need never be parted again. I think we understand each other better than we used, and we know more about the spiritual undercurrent of each other's lives. So let us always keep up a very special sympathy in our prayers. Do you remember St. Francis de Sales' way of praying for the spiritual friends in whom he was particularly interested? There were a very few whom he always had it in his intention to pray for whenever he prayed for himself, and so he asked for nothing without saying 'for us' instead of 'for me.' Father Knox told me of it, and I always hope he puts me in his 'us,' though he did not say so. Shall we do this for one another, and then we shall be sure of being together whenever we are praying? In case you are drawn to say sometimes the same prayers that I say, there are two that I have a particular devotion to in all the little emergencies one meets with during the day. One is the first verse (in Latin) of the *Veni Creator*, and I cannot tell you the immense use

that has been to me; there are so many things one wants light about, and the Holy Ghost helps one so wonderfully if only one asks Him. It is a great Oratorian view, you know, to have a special devotion to the Holy Ghost, and I really could never have believed without experiencing it what an extraordinary help it is. My other prayer is out of *St. Joseph's Hymn*—

Hail, holy Joseph, hail!
Comrade of angels, hail!
Cheer thou the hearts that faint,
And guide the steps that fail.

I think for your sake I must take up now and then with the Prestwichian *Monstra te esse Matrem*.

“Good-bye now, my dear, dear Fanny. God and our dearest Mother bless and keep you. Let me always be in the sweet Heart of Jesus.

“Your most loving friend,
“F. L.”

(TO THE SAME)

“16 Nottingham Place,
“Thursday, November 4, 1852.

“I must send you the enclosed directly, so will only write a few hurried lines to accompany it and to remind you that I shall be longing to hear how you are getting on at home. Mind you tell me all the details—how the little governess answers, and how you succeed with your domestic chapel. I am specially interested about that because we are trying to make one ourselves. Papa has given us leave to turn Arthur's room downstairs into a little oratory, and Arthur takes such an intense interest in planning and designing for it that I am in hopes it will prove quite an object for him. He is full of ecclesiastical ideas just now, as Mr. Bamber has asked him to be Master of Ceremonies at Spanish Place. It is a capital plan to have patrons for the different members of one's family, they take such care of them. I have chosen St. Joseph for Papa, and Our Lady of Dolours for Agnes, St. Philip for Arthur, and St. Raphael and the Angels for the servants and all the temporal affairs.

“I have had a long talk with Agnes about my going. She is very good about it, poor, dear child—it makes me so ashamed to think of my selfishness when Annie went, but then, as Agnes

says, it is what she has expected ever since she came home from school. Papa has said nothing more, and Dr. Grant has not been able to help me as yet. Father Knox told me last week that his penitent at Namur had written to tell him she had taken the habit, with the name of Marie Philippa; they would not give her Marie de St. Philippe because it had been bespoke. He laughed and said he guessed directly that it was I who had engaged it."

(TO THE SAME)

" 16 Nottingham Place,
" Saturday, Eve of the Presentation, 1852.

" You must forgive another little scribbled note, which I must just send you to let you know the happy event which is to take place to-morrow. Dearest Annie is to be professed! I had a letter from her only on Monday to tell me of it. She knew nothing herself until the Thursday before, when they told her she was to enter upon her ten days' retreat. You may imagine her happiness, and mine too, when I tell you she is to come over to England very soon—I expect not many days afterwards. It appears they want her in England, and, as there are none to be professed at Christmas this year, they shorten her noviciate and allow her to make her vows alone. She says she is to be either at Clapham or Northampton, it is not settled which. The Liverpool Superior (who was a girl at Bruges with Annie)¹ has lately gone to Namur and they return to England together. I hope to go and meet them at the boat. How I wish she could have arrived before you left, dearest Fanny. It seems quite a Providence for me her coming over just now. She will help me so much, especially if she remains at Clapham, which, however, I must not build my hope upon.

" A thousand thanks for your dear letter, which I mean to answer more at length in a few days. Caroleen is here, and went with us on Tuesday to see the Duke's funeral. The Scott-Murrays were so kind as to send us an invitation, through Mr. Morris, to go with them to a room they had taken in Fleet Street; so we saw it splendidly, and I think Caroleen enjoyed it very much. The Cardinal was close to us at Richardson's.

" I have so much to say to you, dearest, but you may conceive

¹ Afterwards Mère Aimée de Jésus, Superior-General of the Sisters of Notre Dame.

all the letters I have on my hands just now, writing to tell about Annie and getting prayers for her. I am sure I need not ask for yours. You will think of us *both* to-morrow and beg our dear Lady's blessing on the consummation of our offering of one another."

(TO THE SAME)

"London, January 16, 1853.

"A pouring wet afternoon and a slight interval of exterior domestic peace enable me to attempt a long-desired chat with you. Dear Annie's sudden apparition has taken place since I last wrote to you, and you will guess how much I enjoyed those few days with her, and what a comfort they were to me in every way. She seems more than ever like herself now that she is professed. Her spirits are so joyous and she is so full of life and interest in her missionary work. Her health, too, is much better, and the nuns who knew her at Namur say it appears quite changed since she has been in England. You cannot think how much it was like old times to be travelling all alone with her. We had such a happy journey together to Northampton, and it was a great comfort to me to be able to see her settled in her new home. She is delighted with the Community.

"For her Superior she has the Sister who has been the Superior at Clapham ever since they were founded there. Father de Buggenoms has a most exalted opinion of her. They have sent from Namur a most charming person to replace her at Clapham, the former Mistress of Postulants, Sister Marie Thérésia. She is so winning in her manners, speaks English so perfectly, and is so very clever and *up* to everything, that I expect she will be an immense advantage to the school. Mrs. Petre has succeeded her as Postulant Mistress at Namur. I go often to see Sister Marie Thérésia, and she is a great consolation to me, as you may suppose. She consults me about her arrangements and improvements in the boarding-school, and I am able to help her a little. Father Knox went to see her the other day, and they talked about me.

"I have been making a series of novenas that I may obtain a favourable answer from Papa, and not cause him much pain. I shall begin my last novena next Monday to Our Lady of Dolours and St. Philip. Will you join me in it? Say any

prayers you like. It will end on the Purification. Father Knox is so very, very kind; how good God is to let me have such a director, for I never could have gone through all this without him. He is so thoughtful and so tender of Papa, and he has such a beautiful view about doing these things in the sweetest and gentlest way one can."

(TO THE SAME)

"16 Nottingham Place,
"Wednesday, August 10, 1853.

"I did not mean to have put off writing to you until my last night; but somehow I have not had a moment these last few days. Just at the end, poor dear Willie took it into his head to have my portrait; so there have I been sitting some five or six hours of my precious time, undergoing the humiliation of having my features transferred to paper. I was rather more reconciled, I confess, at the end when I saw the wondrous effect produced by a little judicious flattery. They say it is very like, and as a picture the thing is very nice; it is done in such a charming style.

"I can hardly believe that it is myself who have arrived at this stage of my existence; I feel as if I were a different person quite, and I suppose I shall feel stranger still when I get to Namur. The first sensation, I imagine, will be that of peace and rest, for it has been such a struggle for the last few months. Lately, it has really been almost agony sometimes, and I think it would be impossible to go through such a time again. Leaving the world does not cost me a pang for myself, but it is so difficult not to feel anxious about those whom I leave. However, I know very well that Our dear Lord will care for them far more tenderly than I have ever done, so it is for their good that I should go.

"Your letter was most interesting to me, dearest Fanny, and made me wish that we could have had one more talk before I go. But we shall meet, I trust, one day even in this world, and we shall not be parted in spirit, for we can always find one another in the sweet Heart of Jesus. . . . You will write to me sometimes, will you not? And I shall answer you now and then, when I can. . . . Papa is keeping up very well—better than I expected, really."

The day after this letter was written, Frances Lescher left her home and her country for the Mother House of Notre Dame at Namur. What the parting must have cost both father and daughter we can readily conceive. With true Christian fortitude and generosity he made the sacrifice of yet one more of his children, knowing that God has no higher destiny for a soul than to call it to His service in the religious state; whilst she, with aching heart, but with fixed, undaunted will, began her long life-journey upon the road to sainthood.

CHAPTER VII

NAMUR

“La prière, l’amour, l’enthousiasme tracent l’aurole autour d’un front, parce qu’ils dégagent l’âme qui rend transparente son enveloppe, et rayonne ensuite autour d’elle.”—*AMIEL*.

THE Convent of the Sisters of Notre Dame, situated in the Rue des Fossés, Namur, is the Mother House of the Institute. Here Blessed Julie Billiart, exiled from her native France, carried on a work destined to spread over three continents; here the saintly Mère St. Joseph Blin de Bourdon, her companion and successor, strengthened that work, and here for many years have countless souls been trained in the great traditions of charity, simplicity and obedience—the characteristic virtues of a daughter of Blessed Julie. If the years with their access of work have made imperative the foundation of new centres of training for novices, yet the heart of every Sister of Notre Dame turns with love and reverence to the Mother House, some as to the home of their spiritual infancy, others as to a spot made sacred by the oft-repeated memories of their elders, and all as to the centre whence radiates the spirit of their beloved Institute.

When the great gates in the Rue des Fossés closed upon Frances Mary Lescher she found herself face to face with an entirely new life. Things which before had sounded easy and familiar to her, when she had heard or read of the practices of religious life, wore a very different aspect when they became, as now, matters of personal experience. But Sister Mary of St. Francis, the Mrs. Edward Petre of former days, was mistress of postulants, and in after years Frances Lescher in recalling her kindness at this time, said: “I found in her the tenderest and most sympathetic of mothers to one still smarting from the pang of leaving home. Yet there was something so supernatural about her that she lifted me unconsciously into a higher atmosphere, where her own life of perfect sacrifice and self-denial made me blush for half-heartedness and cowardice.”

The noviciate of a religious house is not a place of gradual transitions. The newcomer has to plunge into the deep before she has time to take her soundings, and duty follows duty so closely that there is little time for introspection, and still less for the indulgence of self-pity. Within a few hours after her arrival, the new postulant, wearing the traditional blue linen working apron, was sent to help a band of novices and postulants to clean vegetables.

From the first, Frances Lescher showed such sure signs of a true vocation that on the fourteenth of September she was admitted to the noviciate, receiving the name of her choice—Sister Mary of St. Philip.

There now began for her two years of spiritual apprenticeship. *Laborare et orare* is the watchword of all religious who embrace the active life, and two years are all too short to teach the young religious all that that watchword implies. The seemingly trivial task, the daily round of simple duties sanctified by prayer and elevation of the intention—this was to be the aim of the aspirant. Many who had known Frances Lescher in her father's house might have judged this period of her life as wholly wasted, but we who know think otherwise, and so assuredly did she. Enveloped at once by the blessed atmosphere of the Mother House with its calm peace, its fragrance of God, its "tranquillity of order," she threw herself with the ardour of her nature into her new duties, as if no others had ever been or were to be.

We have no letters of hers written during her noviceship. She wrote frequently of course to her father, but the Mount Plunket correspondence could not be continued. One or two of her fellow novices survived Sister Mary of St. Philip, and they, after many long years, could still recall her gay good humour, her love of the poor, her ingenuity in finding and appropriating the most disagreeable and arduous tasks, her simple and large faith, her sisterly charity towards her fellow novices, who were nearly all much younger, and certainly less experienced, than herself. The sum of her life as a novice may be expressed in a maxim of that great Christian and great educationist—Madame de Maintenon, *Prendre sur soi, et beaucoup penser aux autres*. But there was nothing obtrusive in Sister Mary of St. Philip's goodness. She was so great in her simplicity of soul that it was as natural to her to think of

others as it was natural to her not to think of self. Yet we must remember that what often seems natural in a good religious is in reality the result of painful effort aided by grace. If the perfection of art be the concealment of art, we may also say that the perfection of an act of virtue is the concealment of natural distaste. The novice, who, but a few months before, had been mistress of her father's house, must have had many opportunities of sacrificing her strong will and wise judgment during this time of probation; that we have no record of any such difficulties proves that she had already learned to give without counting the cost. All through her long life she seemed to be borne onward and upward on the crest of a great wave of faith. Browning might have had her in mind when he wrote one of the most pregnant of his lines: "For I intend to get to God."

There is not much scope for initiative in a noviciate, and originality is certainly discouraged. Later on, when the newcomer has learned the fundamental principles of religious life, she is allowed to exercise her individuality in her method of work, but at the beginning she has to learn that true liberty of spirit can only be acquired by careful, and it may be painful, practice of a holy equality and fraternity. It was not what Sister Mary of St. Philip *did* as a novice that was remembered by her contemporaries, for she would have done exactly as others did. It was herself, her wonderful personality, and her power of wide sympathy which was so large a part of her influence that she exercised it almost unconsciously on those around her. Nor must we forget that strong and saving sense of humour which enabled her to see, and to make others see, the comedy which often underlies some accident or mistake which ultra-sensitive natures are tempted to regard as tragedy. Qualities such as these augured well for her future work for souls, and naturally they did not escape the observant eye of the novice mistress, Mère Aloysie, afterwards Superior-General.

And now as the time of her profession was drawing near, God proved the soul of His faithful servant by a very heavy and quite unexpected trial. The strength of a chain, we are told, depends on its weakest link. If there was a weak link in Sister Mary of St. Philip's spiritual armour, one might have expected it to be in her disposition towards those she loved, and had left behind her in the world. "He who loves father and mother more than Me is not worthy to be called My disciple."

Sister Mary of St. Philip had yet to give one more proof of her worthiness. When she left home she had relied on her youngest sister to remain with her father, and be the comfort of his declining years; and now the news came to her that Agnes also had heard the call of Christ, and had followed Monica to the Benedictine Convent at Winchester. Doubt and perplexity assailed the soul of Sister Mary of St. Philip, the natural promptings of a very deep and holy human love seemed—but only seemed—in conflict with the imperative claim of a higher love. Her religious superiors, of course, could not, and would not, advise on a matter so purely personal; they could but join with her in earnest prayer for light and strength. Both light and strength came to her in God's own time, and she once more set forward to follow the gleam, knowing that it is difficult to have the better of our Lord in the strife of liberality and love, and that the dear father whom she so tenderly loved would not wish to draw her from her quest.

It was on the Feast of the Stigmata of St. Francis, Sept. 17, 1855, that Sister Mary of St. Philip pronounced her vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, “and, according to obedience, a particular care of the instruction of young girls in the company of the glorious Virgin Mary, Our Lady”; and the White Host held before her while she pronounced her vows was laid upon her tongue as their sacred and irrevocable seal.

Six months before this date there had come a visitor to Namur, and the result of his interview with the Reverend Mother-General not only decided Sister Mary of St. Philip's immediate destination, but settled her future career. Mr. J. W. Allies had succeeded Mr. Stokes as secretary of the Catholic Poor School Committee, and he had been deputed by that body to lay before Mère Constantine a proposal that the Sisters of Notre Dame should undertake the foundation and direction of a Training College for Catholic schoolmistresses in England.¹ No such institution was as yet in existence, and the need was urgent. Already, in February, 1853, Mr. Stokes in his monthly magazine, *The Catholic School*, had called upon the Bishops to name the Community to be entrusted with the work, and had appealed to some Catholic lady of means to give five thousand pounds for its foundation.

¹ A Training College for Elementary Teachers was opened by the Sisters of the Holy Child at St. Leonards in 1855.

Such an undertaking was eminently consonant with the spirit of the Institute of Notre Dame, whose chief care it is to instruct the poor. Sister Mary of St. Francis could provide all that was necessary for the foundation, and the vocation of his "Sister Fanny" must have been a proof to Mr. Stokes of the direct working of Providence in the furtherance of his scheme. But it was a serious and difficult enterprise, and Mère Constantine considered the matter carefully, after long and earnest prayer for guidance. On the one hand, the Sisters required for the staff of the proposed College would have to pass public examinations—an unprecedented thing for nuns. Again, the venture would mean a large expenditure, as well as unusual publicity, and lastly there would be continuous strain and anxiety. But on the other hand there was one consideration which weighed down all opposing arguments however powerful—the peril threatening the little ones of Christ's flock. The answer of Mère Constantine was worthy of a great daughter of a great mother. She accepted all the conditions, burdensome and distasteful as many of them were, as a means to the end—the saving of the Faith to the poor by the saving of Catholic schools—the saving of the schools by the training of teachers. "*Les conditions sont difficiles, Monsieur,*" she said, "*mais nous n'abandonnerons pas nos pauvres enfants.*"

The memory of this mission was a proud one to Mr. Allies, for it proved to be the first link in the long chain of his connection with Our Lady's Training College and its revered and beloved head. Year after year, in his speeches after the Teaching Examinations, or in the affectionate letters which always accompanied the Good Conduct Prize, of which he was the annual donor, he would revert to it with almost childlike delight. In 1898, long after his official relations with the College had ceased, he wrote to Sister Mary of St. Philip on the Feast of the Sacred Heart:

"On what day can I write to you with a greater wealth of remembrance, if I cannot, as I wish, talk with you, than on this day? I have just been reading my own account of my visit to your Reverend Mother-General in March, 1855, and of what I then witnessed. And in all the forty-three years which have since passed, your work at Mount Pleasant has been the success by which I have been ever encouraged, and I owe you, and

those who are now gone to their reward—as Mrs. Petre and your immediate predecessor, and so many who have each taken their portion in the labour, and those who are still living—more thanks than I can express. These are the remembrances of which I began to speak and which come at this day. In the name of the Sacred Heart,

“Ever your most devoted and grateful

“T. W. ALLIES.”

The Sisters of Notre Dame were already established in Liverpool when Mr. Allies carried back to England the answer which gave to the city the Training College, and to the Training College Sister Mary of St. Philip. They had been invited over from Belgium a few years before this by that zealous promoter of all good works, Liverpool's great apostle of temperance and charity—Father James Nugent. One would fain dwell for a time on the career of this earnest and holy priest and his relations with the Sisters of Notre Dame. The city in which he laboured so long and so selflessly has honoured his memory by erecting his statue in its principal thoroughfare, but there are more enduring memorials of him in the hearts of those whose grace and privilege it was to have known Monsignor Nugent. When the work of the Sisters in Liverpool had extended beyond all expectation, he would proudly remind them and their pupils how he had been instrumental in bringing the Sisters of Notre Dame to the city, and how he had given them charge of the elementary school in the parish of St. Nicholas. In 1851 the Sisters opened both a Boarding School and a Middle School at Mount Pleasant. The former was now to give place to the new Training College, the latter was to become—that indispensable adjunct of a Training College—a Practising School. Mère Constantine agreed to begin at once the erection of new and suitable buildings, whilst the Catholic Poor School Committee undertook to contribute an annual maintenance grant.

On October 17, 1855, just one month after her profession, Sister Mary of St. Philip returned to England with three companions to begin the great undertaking. Even her friends, much as they esteemed her, little dreamt of the work she was destined to accomplish for Catholic education.

When the little band arrived in London they were met by Mr. Edward Lescher, now a shy cleric in minor orders. He was

much embarrassed at being left in charge of the other Sisters while Sister Mary of St. Philip, with her wonted vigour, went to secure the luggage. But he was much more embarrassed when he saw that the luggage included a collection of mattresses—a gift from the Mother House to the new and needy houses recently opened at Southwark and Sheffield. No cabman could be cajoled into taking this burden, but, after much trouble, a cart was procured, while the Sisters followed in a cab at a snail's pace in order to keep it in sight.

So, in humility and silence, did Sister Mary of St. Philip arrive at the scene of her great mission. It was the sowing of the mustard seed.

CHAPTER VIII

SEEDTIME

"We may not hope to be mowers,
And gather the red ripe ears,
Until we have first been sowers
And watered the furrows with tears."

THE little band of Sisters lost no time in beginning their immediate preparation for the Teacher's Certificate Examination. Sister Mary of St. Philip, at once both student and chief professor, counted among her pupils her sister Annie, now Sister Mary of St. Michael, and her old friend, Lucy Wallis, now Sister Theresa of St. Joseph. There were no visions of future greatness to inspire them, and no traditions of likely questions or idiosyncrasies of examiners to guide them in their studies. Anxious and hard-worked they must have been, for they knew how much depended upon the success of their effort, but they were also both happy and merry, and in after years looked back with keen enjoyment and not a little amusement on their first "high emprise."

Sister Mary of St. Philip made use of every spare moment. "Walking down the corridors she was always reading, or conning maps and charts, which she carried about with her," recalls one of her first companions.

In due time the candidates sat for their examination, and when the results were received on the first Wednesday of March it was found that all had been successful, the three already named being in the First Division. Examiners praised highly the work of all the students, but especially that of Miss Lescher, whose essay on Mediæval Architecture they pronounced to be "more fit for a Quarterly Review than for an examination paper." St. Joseph had not forgotten his clients.

No sooner was the ordeal over than the Sister Superior, Jeanne de Jésus, plunged the valiant candidates into retreat, presumably fearing that their minds might have been too

much distracted by their excursion into the fields of purely secular knowledge. Perhaps, too, she thought the exercises specially necessary for Sister Mary of St. Philip, who, after but a few months of religious profession, was now to be placed at the head of the College, and invested with the plenary powers which the confidence of the Reverend Mother-General and of Sister Mary of St. Francis had conferred upon her. The appointment might, in matter of fact, have created an awkward situation, but her religious superiors, who had learned her sterling worth during her sojourn at Namur, had no apprehensions on that score. The strong simplicity of her character and her zeal for souls prevented her from all self-seeking, and her true humility made her the most docile and obedient of subjects. She was fit to command, precisely because she had learned so well to obey. Her mind was so direct and well-balanced, so absolutely sincere, that she could not but recognise her own capability for the great work entrusted to her, and, seeing it, she was not prevented by a false humility from acknowledging it. She loved her position, and made no secret of her love, but it was wholly because it gave her scope to devote her many gifts to the service of God. She was, indeed, too great to take credit to herself for these, and she expresses perfectly her realisation that she is but an instrument for good in some lines she placed on the title-page of her little history of the Training College, published in 1885—

“ My barque is wafted to the strand
By breath Divine,
And on the helm there rests a Hand
Other than mine.”—ALFORD.

On the Feast of the Purification, 1856, twenty-one young girls were gathered together in the largest room of the provisional Training College to hear Sister Mary of St. Philip's opening lesson on “ Our Lady.” The choice of both day and subject was particularly happy. Just fifty years before, on that same day, the first Sisters of Notre Dame were with their Foundress, Blessed Julie Billiard, in the community room of the little convent in the Rue Neuve, Amiens. She had spoken to them in glowing words of the mystery of the day, and then in great joy of spirit had intoned the *Nunc Dimittis*. The Sisters took up the chant, and had reached the words *lumen ad revelationem gentium*, when the Servant of God suddenly

ceased singing, and they beheld her raised from the ground with radiant countenance, her eyes fixed on the crucifix. In that moment of ecstasy she saw—so runs the tradition in our Institute—the extension of her work through that of her daughters in other lands and other times. Two years earlier—also on February 2—Julie and her first Sisters had pledged themselves at the foot of the altar to devote their lives in poverty, chastity and obedience to the Christian education of girls, and proposed furthermore to *train religious teachers, who should go wherever their services were asked for*. Now in 1856, on the birthday of Our Lady's Training College, the wheel had come full circle, and the pledge was to receive its rich fulfilment.

The Feast of the Purification is a red-letter day in the Training College. Year after year as it comes round, the students of Mount Pleasant, wearing each a tiny bunch of snowdrops, and standing before the portrait of her whom, not having known, they yet revere, lift their voices in the song she loved—

“ Oh, what of the years since it first was pitched
On the Hill in the winter's snow ?
The Camp is the same—though its tents be more—
As at Candlemas long ago.

Many is the prayer which our comrades above
In the City where the files are crowned,
Shall breathe for the troops that are fighting below,
Or tenting on the old camp ground.”

There was a peculiar fragrance about the early days of the College, as is so often the case in the beginning of a great and noble enterprise conducted by a capable and sympathetic leader. And this was the beginning, not only of the College, but of the very business for which the College had been created. Hence there was a sense of pioneership in both teachers and taught, which stimulated courage and enthusiasm and fostered the spirit of fraternity; hence, too, an ever-present and sustaining ideal of a spiritual mission, Sister Mary of St. Philip had breathed a spark of her own apostolic fire into the hearts of her students; she fanned it into flame by her conferences and exhortations, and yet more by her example.

Her personality, with its admirable blending of sweetness and strength, had a wonderful effect, on both her colleagues

and students, and this influence endured to the end. Even in the late autumn of her life, those who were brought into contact with her fell at once under the charm which drew to her the hearts of young and old alike. She was delightful always, but in 1856 her gifts and graces of mind and heart were in their spring-tide, and she ruled her little band of subjects by the regal sceptre of sympathy.

"I have lost my note-book," wrote one of these early students, "but I have all her counsels in my heart. If the letter is forgotten the spirit never can be. When I have a decision to make, even after all these years, I ask myself what she would have advised, and act accordingly."

In this first year Sister Mary of St. Philip was practically sole teacher of the students, needlework, drawing and music being the only subjects taught by other Sisters. As one of the students of this time proudly boasted, "She was ours in a way that she could never be to the multitudes that came after." In January, 1857, there came an influx of new Queen's Scholars, whilst the twenty-one became regretfully students of the Second Year. But they had no intention of yielding up to the newcomers any share in their monopoly of their beloved mistress, and accordingly they presented her with a joint petition that she should not delegate to another Sister any of the subjects she herself had hitherto taught them. The request was granted, for, as the student who recalled the incident added, "Sister Mary of St. Philip never denied us anything that she could legitimately grant us."

At this time of beginnings the teachers as well as the pupils had much to learn. Sister Mary of St. Philip multiplied herself in order to give her colleagues leisure for study. She seemed ubiquitous: in the lecture room, the refectory, recreation hall—she was always in the midst of her girls.

The old house was small and inconvenient, and, as in all beginnings, there were many difficulties arising from straitened quarters and lack of material goods, but these drawbacks were accepted as a matter of course, and often became a cause of gaiety when seen in the light of Sister Mary of St. Philip's bright humour. She would often laugh with later generations over the discomfort of the long benches which her twenty-one first students knocked over with their crinolines whenever they stood up. And in the same way she would invest the

daily round and trivial task with such pomp and circumstance that her students, whilst they laughed at the play of her fancy and imagination, learned the valuable lesson that he who is faithful in little things will be faithful also in those that are great.

May brought the Feast of St. Philip. The students offered Holy Communion for her, and when she came into their refectory to say grace before breakfast they greeted her with Father Faber's hymn to her dear patron saint—

“Sweet Saint Philip, thou hast won us.”

She was destined to hear it for many years on that anniversary, but on this first occasion she was completely taken by surprise, and her face betrayed her emotion. Was she transported by it to the old sweet home-life in which the Oratory had played so large a part? Or was she, even at the beginning of her religious life, experiencing in the love of her spiritual children the hundredfold in this world promised to those who forsake home and kindred to follow Christ? A walk to the Redemptorist Church at Bishop Eton, and a concert in the evening, at which the Community were present, completed the celebration. It was all very simple, but the memory of that first St. Philip's Day was engraved on the hearts both of mistress and students.

The new building—a very old one now—was opened at the beginning of 1857. Early in the same year the Reverend Mother-General came from Namur to see the progress of the work which she had initiated. The students assembled on the lawn to greet her, on a day when sunshine and shower were contending for the mastery. Unfortunately, she arrived at the very moment when the floodgates of heaven seemed open for a space. The students bravely began the song which they had carefully practised for the reception of the distinguished visitor—“Hail, Smiling Morn.” But Sister Mary of St. Philip must have detected a lack of enthusiasm in the opening notes, for she went cheerfully among the singers, and whispered the encouraging words: “Never mind, my dears, *Ma Mère* does not understand English.”

In December, 1858, the students of Our Lady's Training College were so brilliantly successful in the Certificate Examination that Mr. (afterwards Sir) Francis Sandford, Chief Secretary

of the Education Department, wrote a personal letter of congratulation to Sister Mary of St. Philip. As he learned to know her better his admiration of her intellectual and administrative powers increased. "Miss Lescher," he once said, "is a woman who might fearlessly place her hand on the helm of the State."

Mr. Marshall, H.M.I., spoke of this success of 1858 as "unparalleled in the history of Training Colleges."

We need hardly add that the results of the Diocesan Examination in Christian Doctrine and Scripture, inaugurated in this very year, were equally brilliant.

But if 1858 was a year of triumph and of joy for Sister Mary of St. Philip, it was a year, too, of deep personal sorrow. God purifies the souls of His servants in divers ways; there are crucifixions of the body, of the mind, and of the heart; and in His inscrutable wisdom He chooses what mode of purification is best for each of us. Sister Mary of St. Philip was called to do a great work for the Catholic Church, a work which made a heavy tax on her physical as well as her intellectual powers. In order to accomplish this work she was granted a long life of vigorous health and unimpaired mentality. But suffering is the hall-mark of sanctity, and suffering came to her in the guise of detachment. Over and over again in her life was she to learn that—

"God gives us love; something to love
He lends us; but when love is grown
To ripeness, that on which it throve
Falls off, and Love is left alone."

In the spring, death claimed Sister Mary of St. Michael, the beloved Annie of bygone days, and in the following December her youngest brother, Arthur, died in Canada.

Sister Mary of St. Michael, after teaching for a short time in the boarding-school at Northampton, had been sent, at her own earnest request, to teach the children of the poor in London. The most coveted work of a Sister of Notre Dame is, in the words of her Rule, "to labour amongst the poor in the most abandoned places."¹ The children confided to Sister Mary of St. Michael's care were, indeed, poor, neglected and suffering, and she strove with self-sacrificing devotedness

¹ Rule, Chap. I. art. 6.

to make up to them in some measure for the hardness of their lot. When a new convent was founded in Sheffield, Sister Mary of St. Michael went north; she found plenty of scope for her apostolic zeal, and became in truth the life and soul of the little community.

In 1856, as we have already seen, she joined her sister at Mount Pleasant, Liverpool, in order to prepare for the Certificate Examination. After her success she remained at the College to help Sister Mary of St. Philip. She it was who composed the "Farewell Consecration to Our Lady," which is still recited by the Children of Mary on the last evening of their College life. Her beauty and grace of mind and person, her varied talents, her relationship to Sister Mary of St. Philip, and, above all, her holiness, endeared her to the students, who loved to see the two sisters together. But once more the sword of separation was to part these two chosen souls, and this time, till death did them join. Sister Mary of St. Michael's health had never been robust, and watchful superiors noted that a breakdown was now imminent. In the hope that her native air might avert this, she was transferred to Clapham, but she grew steadily weaker, and when winter came she went to the Convent infirmary, never to leave it again.

Her brother Edward, who had just been ordained, offered himself as one of the chaplains to the troops sent out to India during the Mutiny. She wrote him an enthusiastic letter of congratulation and encouragement, characteristically holding out to him the prospect of martyrdom as the reward of his self-sacrifice. It proved to be her farewell letter, for on the eve of the Feast of St. Joseph she died.

Sister Mary of St. Philip wrote, both in French and English, a simple and tender notice of her beloved Sister in which we learn the secret of that short life in religion. From the very beginning, "she had determined to conquer herself in everything, and she had already aspired to that vow, which later she obtained permission to make, of doing always that which she deemed most perfect." Seldom did Sister Mary of St. Philip mention her name in after years, but one day meeting Sister Mary Patricia on her way to the Chapel, she gave her the following beautiful letters from which to make her spiritual reading. They had probably been sent to her from Bergholt after Monica's death.

(SISTER MARY OF ST. MICHAEL to DAME MARGARET MARY)

“ MY VERY DEAR SISTER,

“ I have put off for some days writing to you, in hopes of getting one of your dear peaceful letters before Lent, and I will not give up hoping yet; but I cannot delay any longer thanking you and all I love at Winchester, for the great help their prayers have been to me, when I felt to need them so much. I feel so very, very grateful that I believe no one can realise it who has not felt the need as I have. And now that I am again saying, *Heu mihi quia incolatus*,¹ after I had expected the time was come to say *Misericordias Domini in æternum cantabo*,² I feel that it would be an infidelity to the spiritual friendship which began when our vocations first flowered not to share with you something of the joy I felt when I seemed to look into the other world, and to grasp Our Lord's Hand which was to lead me there. I fancy you would like to know exactly how I felt then, so I will tell you as well as I can, though you know words are weak to describe such joys as that. Can you imagine the thrill which went through me when I heard a Sister say that the Doctor thought I was in a state to receive Extreme Unction on Monday morning? Indeed, I did feel very ill then, and yet quite confident that Our Lord would not let me die till I had received those helps I had so constantly prayed for at the hour of death. All that day my head was far more clear and present than it is in my ordinary state, and I spent the entire day in preparing for the Last Sacraments. I had often thought that fear of death might come at last, and temptations and regrets at my past negligent and sinful life; but it was not so—I could see nothing but Our Lord with His five open Wounds and His Precious Blood. He seemed to wish to hide from me with His Sacred Person all my miseries of thirty years. I could not see them though I tried, for I was almost afraid of so great a peace after the life I have led. It is true that for a few minutes death came before me as something awful, and my nature seemed to dread it, but, when I accepted it in union with the death of Jesus, the bitterness passed at once. Then came evening. Dr. Grant³ was to have come, but by a mistake in the message,

¹ “ Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged.”

² “ The mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever.”

³ The saintly Bishop of Southwark.

did not arrive till the next morning. So after Benediction Father Coffin carried Our dear Lord to me in procession, accompanied by the Sisters, through the house, which was decked up as for a feast with lights and flowers. First, I made my confession, and received absolution for all the sins of my life. I wish I could express the great joy that filled me from the moment that Our Lord was in the room. I felt that Jesus had come to visit me, and that it was He Who washed me in His Blood, and fed me with His Body, and signed and sealed me for the last combat and the last victory; and then, dear Minnie, as those last unctions were being made, the sins and stains of each of my senses seemed to drop off me. When it was all over, and I remained alone with Our Lord, I was filled with a peace and a joy beyond all I have ever felt, one moment of which would out-balance all the trials of a long life, and there seemed to me but one thing I could say as a thanksgiving—‘Lord, do with me what Thou wilt, for I am all Thine.’ And so the grace to be content either to live or to die came to me with that last Sacrament, and any longing to die merged into a longing to do His Will for life or death, and I understood for the first time that it showed a greater confidence in Jesus not to fear living than not to fear dying, and a greater love to trust Him for all things. And now, dear Minnie, I still feel that I am signed and sealed for a better world and kept waiting, haply for my unworthiness, and I fear, as a sacrilege and profanation, anything that could again stain those senses Jesus has purified. Can you not imagine me as I lay awake that happy night thinking of the graces I had so suddenly received, and kissing the places on my hands where the sacred unction had been? And my great devotion then and ever since has been to pray for the agonising and those near their end, for I felt what awful desolation it must be to be without help and comfort at such a time. This is the little prayer I say constantly for a happy death; I think you will like it—

“ ‘O my Lord and Saviour, support me in that last hour in the strong arms of Thy Sacraments and by the fresh fragrance of Thy consolations; let the absolving words be said over me, and the Holy Oil sign and seal me, and Thy Own Body be my food, and Thy Blood my sprinkling; let sweet Mary breathe upon me and, my dear Angel whisper peace to me, and in them

all and through them all may I receive the grace of perseverance.
AMEN.' ¹

"And now, dearest Minnie, good-bye and believe in the constant affection of your own Sister in the sweet Wounds of Jesus.

"MARIE DE ST. MICHEL, S.N.D."

(TO THE SAME)

"MY VERY DEAR SISTER,

"I cannot tell you how long I have been looking forward to having a real talk with you—something like some of our last talks of blessed memory at Nottingham Place, and yet very different now, for we are both changed since then. I loved your last letter very much, and thank you many times for it. There is always a halo of peace round your letters which does me good, that halo which it is so difficult for us to keep in the midst of what Father Faber called our lifelong martyrdom of vulgar and ignoble toil. It is no time for me to talk about toil now, dearest, except to look back upon it as a thing that was, but is now past for ever, and to wish, oh! so earnestly, that I had toiled more wisely and more devotedly. Do you remember those words 'Silence is the voice of waiting and sighing is the voice of longing'? Those are my voices now. I feel like some one waiting on the shore of a vast ocean after having crossed the dreary burning desert, waiting for some one who is to fetch me. It will not be long before He comes, and yet sometimes I get impatient, and wonder why He is so long, and think what if after all He should not come. This one thought of death has been my grace of the year; it began on the first day of it, and has never left me since. It has been to me—

'Like a treasure inexhausted,
Like a vision unconfessed,'

it has been my guiding-star through many difficulties, my rest in many labours, my joy in all sorrows; it has helped to convert me from a life of much unfaithfulness. After so many graces I cannot help trusting it will take me safely to my true home. This seems all very sweet and consoling, does it not, dear Minnie?—but there are other things to be thought of besides

¹ Cardinal Newman.

the joy of getting out of the reach of sin. We know the last temptations are the strongest, and that even St. Peter of Alcantara trembled up to the last moment lest he should lose his soul; so, my dearest Sister, if you have ever prayed for me, pray now a thousand times more. Besiege Our dear Lady's throne for me, and get a place of refuge for me in Our Lord's Wounds, for, with all my longing to die, who would not tremble to appear before Jesus as a Judge, after thirty years of sin, six years of unfaithfulness in religion? So pray for me very much, dearest, and never tire of asking the gift of final perseverance—it may depend on your prayers—and never, dearest Sister, say one word to Our Lord about my getting better. You will have to answer for my sins if you do. Did I tell you I was making a great novena to the Angels from the 8th of March, the day I was first told I was seriously ill, to the 8th of December, the anniversary of my entering religion, to obtain the graces I most need, and to prepare myself to go and live with them one day? I am now with the Cherubim, praying to know God better, that I may learn next month from the Seraphim to love Him perfectly. Will you think of this sometimes for me? Do you remember how we used to love the Angels of old? Do you think that because I talk of living with the Angels, I dream of being fit to be seen amongst them? I assure you I can hardly see beyond the first vision of Our Lord in judgment, and Purgatory, from which I shall think it an infinite mercy if I am released in sixty or a hundred years; because, when I look back, I see all infidelity and no penance. And yet, I long to be there, for the sooner I begin my Purgatory, the sooner I shall finish it, you know. I should be very glad if Our Lord let me suffer something for Him in my illness, but He must do as He likes best.

“I will pray for you as you wish, dearest, and I will ask Him to make you very faithful to Him, to your vows, to your rule and to His grace.

“I have written you all these things, because I thought you would like to know how I was going on, and because I would keep up to the last that spiritual friendship we began together so many years ago, and which nothing can make me forget. One more embrace in Jesus' sweet Wounds.

“Your own very loving Sister,

“MARIE DE ST. MICHEL.”

When the call of God came to Sister Mary of St. Michael those whose privilege it was to know the beauty and innocence of her soul could but repeat the words of Holy Writ, *Pretiosa in conspectu Domini mors sanctorum ejus*.

Arthur died in the following December, and Sister Mary of St. Philip wrote to thank Mrs. Grehan for her letter of sympathy :

(SISTER MARY OF ST. PHILIP TO FANNY GREHAN)

"Your letter was such a comfort to me; it really did me good, and I sent it to dear Papa, as I felt sure it would do him good too. Our Blessed Lord has sent us a bitter cup, and of course I feel it for Papa as well as for myself, but it is not wholly without consolation. I cannot doubt that darling Annie watched over that death-bed, while we were denied even the comfort of praying for the sufferer; and she would not rest, I am sure, till he was safe in our Heavenly Father's bosom. Papa has written me very consoling letters; in his last ones he tells me so many edifying traits in dear Arthur's conduct since he has been in Canada, and there is much comfort in dwelling on these.

"I was so interested in your accounts of that wonderful island in the Atlantic; it would be a lovely place for a convent. I am very glad you have such nice friends in those Wilberforces who seem to be all that is delightful.

Thanks for the Act of Contrition. Our children in the Practising School are going to learn it, and I shall like to think they are saying the same as yours in your Mt. Plunket School.

"The Cardinal is expected in Liverpool this week, but as he does not stay with the Bishop, we do not know whether he will come here. He goes to Mr. Challoner's."

Cardinal Wiseman did pay a visit to the College on this occasion, though, as it was during the summer vacation, the students were absent. But he addressed the Community, encouraging and stimulating their zeal by his kindly words of appreciation and counsel.

A little later came Sir James Kaye-Shuttleworth, the originator of the Pupil Teacher system, who inspected the College with the keen mind of an educational expert. After reading

examination papers and listening to a *criticism* lesson, he expressed to the assembled students the great pleasure he had derived from his visit. All that he had seen and heard, he said, had served but to strengthen the conviction he had always felt of the great power given to Colleges by making them *Denominational*.

Lord Granville, then President of the Committee of Council on Education, was another visitor in these early days.

In 1859 the shadow of the Cross fell athwart the Community of Mount Pleasant. The sudden death of the Superior, Sister Jeanne de Jésus, was a grievous trial to all, and particularly to Sister Mary of St. Philip, who had ever found support in the calm energy, the singular clear-sightedness, and the active sympathy of her Superior. But sorrow, for Sister Mary of St. Philip, as for all God's loving and trusting children, proved but the "shade of His hand outstretched caressingly." The successor of Sister Jeanne was no other than Sister Marie Thérésia, of whom Fanny Lescher told us something in her letters of the old Clapham days.

Henceforth these two chosen souls were to work side by side for many long years in the Master's Vineyard, one in aim, in spirit, and in love—their watchword *Adveniat regnum tuum*.

CHAPTER IX

"ON HIS MAJESTY'S SERVICE"

"Old principles re-appear under new forms. It (Christianity) changes with them in order to remain the same. In a higher world it would be otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often."—NEWMAN.

SISTER MARY of St. Philip's long years at Mount Pleasant were, in one sense, uneventful. Life in a Training College varies but little from year to year, and changes and developments are generally so gradual as to be almost imperceptible. When we look back we realise that Our Lady's Training College is what it is because of the wonderful personality of her who guided its destiny for nearly half a century. In the next few chapters we shall ignore the passage of the years in order to give the reader an impression—however inadequate—of the principles which guided Sister Mary of St. Philip in her educational policy, the ideals which she set before her students, the spirit of selfless service with which she inspired them, and the methods she employed in training them to become worthy members of a noble profession.

There were at times those who praised her for her breadth of mind in keeping abreast with modern ideas, and in falling in with State requirements; but there were also those who judged her not too gently for these selfsame things. Both alike missed the master idea—we might well say the master passion—which harmonised all surface inconsistencies, and unified all changes. That master desire of her soul was the preservation and propagation of the Faith in England. One day—it was in 1865—as her girls sat round her, she told them that when she was still in the world she had asked Our Lord to let her work for the conversion of England. "And you see," she added in radiant gratitude, "I could not have done so much in any other position as in that in which God has placed me. I have not deserved such a grace after all my sins."

From this one aim sprang all her initiative, all her action; she never lost sight of it for an instant, and to the end it was the meaning of her wonderful alertness and energy. She stood erect and strong, feeling, so to speak, the temperature of the times, watching the horizon with wakeful and intelligent eye. If she bent to the breeze or the blast, it was but as does the ripe corn, stooping only to rise again, not once moving from the spot where her feet were fixed, beautiful in the preaching of the Gospel of Peace.

And in this spirit did Sister Mary of St. Philip look like the time—not indeed to beguile it, and still less to go with it—but she strained every nerve, and put forth every resource, and sacrificed many secondary views and plans in order that measures intended to cripple “denominational” schools, as they were called, should be nullified precisely by their requirements being met with unexpected efficiency from within the body of Catholic teachers. Like St. Ignatius Loyola, she knew how to fight the world with its own weapons; like him, too, she knew how to direct everything, material as well as spiritual, to the greater honour and glory of God. Like the Church she loved, she was sometimes accused of changing with the changing times, but, as with the Church, seeming changes were in truth but different phases of one consistent and unchangeable plan.

It was not till some time after the Reform Bill was passed in 1832 that the national conscience of England was awakened to the necessity and duty of educating the children of the working classes. These little ones had, alas, received a grim form of education in the workshops and mines to which they had been condemned, at least indirectly, by the stupidity or indifference of the many, and the cupidity and cruelty of the few. But educational reform moved very slowly; and long after 1844 many of the evils which Mrs. Browning so powerfully and pathetically exposed in *The Cry of the Children* were still existent.

Catholics were only just recovering from the effects of the persecution and disabilities of penal times. They were looking around them, seeing what was to be done, and how, with their limited resources, they could best do it. We hear much now-a-days of the watchword, “Education for Life,” but it is well to pause and ask ourselves what modern educationists mean by “life.” “Now this is eternal life; that they may know Thee,

the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent." This is, for Catholics, the true definition of life, and this is the primary end of Catholic education. Christ founded His Church not to promote what the world calls education, but to teach and help men to save their souls—"higher education" in the best sense of the term. This is not to say, however, that the Church opposes education; if it will aid men in attaining salvation, then does she approve of it, bless it and employ it as a great means to a great end. But it is always a means to an eternal end, and it is precisely because many who are not of the Fold view Education only as a means to a temporal end that they misunderstand and misrepresent the position of the Catholic Church. The aim of Catholic education is the full and harmonious development of a man's various faculties, so that he may be best able to realise his destiny through the fulfilment of his duty to God, his neighbour and himself. Such an education is the birthright of every child, whether of high or low degree, and though its content may vary according to circumstances, yet the essential principle—education for eternal life—holds for all, and it is the duty of the Catholic Church to provide for it. She has, thank God, at all times and in all places found willing workers in this field of religious instruction. Julie Billiart, at the end of the eighteenth century, had gathered the children round her when she was lying on her bed of pain in her humble cottage home at Cuvilly, and had taught them the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Some decades later, Fanny Lescher and her sisters, gathered the children of the village in their father's coach-house, and there taught them the selfsame lesson. Julie Billiart, as we know, became later the Foundress of the Institute of Notre Dame, of which Fanny Lescher was destined to be so illustrious a member. The aim of the Institute is, in the words of the Rule, "to work chiefly at the gratuitous instruction of poor children . . . to train them to good morals, Christian virtues and the duties of their state"; and secular subjects are taught primarily as means to this end. But this was not the educational ideal of the mid-nineteenth century in England. The country was increasing in wealth and power, and it was recognised that if we were to hold our own as a nation in the world of commerce the British working man must be educated; in short, education was regarded by many exclusively as a good commercial investment. Then, as now,

there were, of course, some great minds who held that education was something higher and nobler than these materialists conceived it to be, yet even these great minds often failed to grasp the world-old truth that morality must be based on religion. To secure this religious instruction, Catholic priests, aided by zealous lay-helpers, gladly gave their time and services to the instruction of poor children. But a wider organisation of effort was necessary, and it was essential that Catholic children should not be handicapped in life through lack of instruction in secular subjects.

In 1837 the Government gave some education grants, mainly for building purposes, but Catholics did not receive any benefit from these. In 1847, however, the Pupil Teacher system was introduced into existing schools, and special grants were set apart to pay the stipends of the Pupil Teachers. There were already some very good voluntary Catholic schools attached to various parishes, and the Vicars-Apostolic decided to make their just claim for a share of State aid. They based their claim on the well-known fundamental Catholic principle—that the State is bound to supply, at the public cost, the shortcomings of those of its citizens who are unable to provide for their children’s education, and, further, that individual liberty—man’s inherent right—means liberty of conscience, and that liberty of conscience demands liberty of religious education. To secure these rights a committee of Catholic ecclesiastics and influential laymen was formed in 1847. This *Catholic Poor School Committee*, as it was styled for many years, did splendid work for Catholic elementary schools, and now, as the *Catholic Education Council*, is one of the mainstays of the Church in these not less difficult days. One of the most zealous members of the committee formed in 1847 was Mr. Edward Petre, the husband of her whom we now know as Sister Mary of St. Francis. He died in 1848.

The *Catholic Poor School Committee* was successful in securing a share of State aid for Catholic schools under certain conditions. Many new schools were also built through the generosity of Catholics both rich and poor. Even at this early stage, however, there were some who questioned the policy and action of the committee, fearing the danger that might result from any connection between Catholic education and the State; nor need we, in the light of history, be surprised at such

conservative tendencies, even though we may not always agree with them on every point. But a great problem, then as now, was the supply of teachers; this was solved, for some time at least, by the opening of the Training College for men at Hammer-smith in 1846, and the College at Liverpool for women, ten years later.

In these early days Catholic schools were inspected by Catholics appointed by the Education Department, and no restrictions were imposed as to hour or duration of religious instruction. The Catholic Inspector for the southern schools was Mr. Marshall, the well-known Author of *Christian Missions*. It is interesting to read in his official report for 1856 his conception of a teacher :

“When I have clearly detected in any teacher, after comparing my impressions with those of the managers, the absence of the first and most essential condition of success in the duties of his office—steadfastness of purpose and religious care of the children committed to his trust—I have always used any influence I possess to secure his dismissal, whatever might be the superiority of his talent or knowledge. Against such teachers I declare open war—against the selfish, worldly, ambitious, and indifferent.”

Mr. Scott Nasmyth Stokes inspected the northern schools, and both his enthusiastic official interest in the work and his warm personal interest in its head made him the chief lay-helper and friend of Our Lady's Training College.

“His knowledge and experience,” wrote Sister Mary of St. Philip in after years, “were not only exceptionally valuable to the beginners at Liverpool, but they were placed at the disposal of the Sisters with a kindness, a generosity, and a delicacy that they can never forget.” And he, in his turn, said of her : “Sister Mary of St. Philip possesses qualities of mind and heart rarely found united in one individual.” His niece, who became later on a Sister of Notre Dame, used to recall how she had heard from his own lips all that he and Sister Mary of St. Philip had done for the Training College, and how when it began he went evening after evening to direct the studies of Sisters and students. “To my mind,” she said, “the two were one when a soul, or the good of religion, was in question.”

In 1868 Mr. Lowe's Revised Code established the principle of payment by results in elementary schools. The extension of

the same system to Training Colleges involved considerable modifications in their financial position, thus giving serious cause for apprehension as to their future upkeep. Hitherto, full grants for tuition and maintenance had been paid for all students in residence, and there had been a small extra allowance for books to all First Class Queen’s Scholars. Now, the payment of grants for the students was deferred till after they had left college, and secured two favourable reports, with an interval of twelve months between them, in their schools. At the same time personal allowances were discontinued and the College authorities were called upon to provide from fees and private subscriptions one-fourth of the cost of maintenance and tuition of the students. This implied a further difficulty, for, should a student break down in health during her college course, or should she, after leaving college, fail for some reason or other to obtain her parchment certificate, no grant would be received in respect of her by the college authorities. The Women’s College at St. Leonards-on-Sea could not face the financial strain, and closed its doors in 1863, after eight years of successful and laborious work. That Our Lady’s Training College was able to steer its course through the troubled waters was due to the generous benefactions of her to whom it owed its existence—Sister Mary of St. Francis. But the crisis was a grave one, and Sister Mary of St. Philip decided to enlist the sympathy and support of the managers of Catholic schools, by appealing for their co-operation in securing the necessary grants. In conjunction with her Superior, Sister Marie Thérésia, the official Principal of the College, she drew up a circular letter, which was sent to the managers and was everywhere received with cordiality and kindness.

“We should scarcely feel justified,” it continues, after explaining the situation, “in carrying on the work under such disadvantages, did we not hope, that those whose labours we are seeking to alleviate, will give us what assistance they can, by their sympathy and co-operation. This assistance may be rendered—

- (1) By engaging as teachers those who have received two years’ training.
- (2) By making these engagements so far permanent, as to admit of the teachers gaining their parchment certificates.

It is not, of course, suggested that any teacher's services should be retained, when the interests of the school will suffer; but it is hoped that the managers will not hastily alter their arrangements, by disconnecting their schools from Government, by unnecessarily changing their teachers, or by suppressing departments in which certified assistants are employed, so long as these teachers have not had the opportunity of completing the service, which ensures payment for their previous training. And, while on our side we will spare no pains to render our students fit for their most important and difficult duties, we venture to ask for them a continuance of that considerate indulgence and also of that paternal care, which they so much need at the commencement of their career, and which is more readily granted, when their youth and inexperience are taken into account. In conclusion, we would beg to remind you of the necessity of giving immediate notice to the Council Office when a fresh teacher takes charge of a school."

But if the Revised Code brought anxiety to the Training College, it brought panic to the managers of Catholic schools, and the opponents of the Catholic Poor School Committee lifted up their voices again, to protest against connection with the State. Sister Mary of St. Philip thought with the committee that Catholics could not afford to give up State aid, and it is of considerable interest to find Father Faber, who rarely occupied himself with public questions, eagerly advocating the same views.

The crisis passed. Once again the efficiency of the Catholic schools was proved by the opportunity afforded for comparison with their neighbours. But let it not be thought that Catholic educationists have ever upheld the principle of "payment by results." They held that it was essentially an evil, though at the same time they realised that the only alternative was to refuse State aid, and run the risk of having to close their schools. Of the two evils they chose the less. But Sister Mary of St. Philip redoubled her vigilance and her zeal; she lost no opportunity of warning her students against the danger of looking upon their pupils as grant-earning machines, and she implored them not to measure success by the number of "passes." "I know one teacher," she laments, "whose children all pass in

reading, writing, and arithmetic, but the manager comes to me in despair about their lack of religious knowledge. That is not success. It is failure, and very bad failure. I hope none of you will seek success of that kind.”

But happily such cases were few. The students of Our Lady’s College had been trained to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s, and to God the things that are God’s; and Sister Mary of St. Philip, with grateful heart, said over and over again: “I generally find that the schools where secular work is done regularly and well are equally good with regard to religious instruction.”

A far graver crisis than that of 1868 was caused by the Education Act of 1870. Inquiries made by the Education Authorities at Whitehall disclosed the fact that in England and Wales there was school accommodation for only half the children of school age, while only one-third of these—the majority being under ten years of age—went to school at all.¹ Compulsory education and incidentally the “Conscience Clause” were the strong remedies prescribed by the Code. Catholics were naturally much perturbed, and there was again a desire on the part of some to renounce State aid and shoulder the burden of supporting Catholic schools wholly by voluntary contributions. The Bill was passed, and to many it seemed the death-knell of Catholic ideals in education. For the Conscience Clause relegated religious instruction and observances to stated times: the beginning and end of each of the two daily sessions. The ground of fear was the theoretic boundary line drawn by the Bill between religious and secular instruction. No Catholic, of course, so draws the line, and if we consider the matter even solely from the technical point of view neither should any educationist. It is constantly being urged upon teachers that different branches of knowledge should not be isolated, that they should be correlated whenever possible. Why religious knowledge should be the only exception to this rule is a problem of which Catholics may well demand a satisfactory solution, since religious knowledge is

¹ Mr. Fowler estimated that indirect compulsion had existed previous to 1870, through the operation of the educational clauses of the Factory and Mines Acts. From 1870 alongside the Factory and Mines Acts, we have growing up a system of compulsion by means of “Education Acts.” The result was a highly complicated system which was a fruitful source of litigation.

part of the great body of Truth. It is precisely because Catholics are so consistent in their application of this theory of correlation of religious and of secular knowledge that they insist on Catholic children being taught in Catholic schools by Catholic teachers. There is a Catholic point of view in matters secular as well as in matters religious, and non-Catholics who visit our schools recognise that there is also that subtle and indefinable thing, Catholic atmosphere. Children brought up in this atmosphere learn the Catholic point of view, and they learn, too, that there is no time, place, or circumstance in life in which God has no part or claim. No Catholic holds that the State has a right to silence the voice of prayer on the lips of our little ones, and to close the mouths of teachers to the formulæ of the faith and the Gospel of Christ during even one hour of the day. But, while every loyal Catholic must mistrust whatsoever has the appearance of compromise, it must be borne in mind that concession is not necessarily synonymous with compromise, and that to hold doggedly aloof from all concession may well be suicidal. In the present case, as both Sister Mary of St. Philip, and her old friend Father Rowe—the Oratorian, Principal of the Hammersmith Training College—took pains to show, the Conscience Clause left the whole tone and atmosphere of our schools essentially Catholic; in conforming to it, Catholics contravened neither the letter nor the spirit of the law, nor did they separate, as did the framers of the Bill, education from religion. It was a system with which they could co-operate without any sacrifice of principle; and, precisely in order to keep the religious instruction of the children in their hands, they came to accept it. In point of view, it gave us a relative freedom, a freedom which has often made the conditions of our schools in Protestant England an object for “the envy of less happier lands.” Yet to rejoice in the freedom is not to call the enactment which gave it, progress. Sister Mary of St. Philip never so called it. But had Catholics in that crisis refused to close with the terms offered, because they could not admit the principle which dictated the terms, elementary education would have passed out of Catholic hands, and with it the opportunity of teaching Catholic truth to the people. This was emphatically Sister Mary of St. Philip’s view, as it had been Father Faber’s in 1857. Yet she fully grasped the real dangers of the Bill:

- (1) That Catholic teachers should, under pressure of the competition with the Elementary Schools of the whole of England into which the system of general “undenominational” inspection now brought them, yield to the temptation of neglecting the teaching of the one subject which was neither examined nor paid for.
- (2) That many of the children, being bound to attend only during the secular hours, should be absent from the religious instruction.

How often, how earnestly, did Sister Mary of St. Philip insist on these points to her students, past and present, “instant in season, out of season, reproving, instructing, entreating, rebuking in all patience and doctrine.”¹ How often in her conferences to the schoolmistresses during the annual retreat would she implore them to enforce punctual attendance by closing the school doors at nine o’clock, so as to secure a clear three-quarters of an hour every morning for religious instruction; and with what solemn emphasis would she impress on them that in any schools where late-comers are admitted religious instruction should be given, not at the beginning, but at the end of the school meeting. On the other hand she was equally insistent that Catholic teachers should not devote to direct religious observance or instruction any of the time apportioned to secular subjects. She reminded them that there was question in this matter of a legal contract, and that they were bound in justice to keep its terms. The absolute rectitude and straightforwardness of her character made her impress upon all concerned that the loyal observance of the Conscience Clause was a grave duty.

As we look back now, we realise the wisdom of those who decided Catholic policy in relation to the Education Act of 1870. Had Catholics assumed a *non possumus* attitude, elementary education would have passed almost entirely out of our hands. Even with State aid it was difficult enough for us to keep pace with rate-built and rate-maintained schools; without grants it would have been practically impossible.

A minor consequence of the Act was the redistribution of inspectors over the different educational areas. Hitherto, as we have seen, the Education Department had appointed Catholic

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 2.

Inspectors for Catholic schools, now there was to be no such distinction, and Catholic and non-Catholic inspectors alike were each to have appointed districts in which they inspected all the schools. The change caused real grief to the Catholic teachers as a body, for they had found in their Catholic Inspectors true friends and guides. Some, of course, were untouched by the change, for Mr. Stokes and Mr. Renouf were still in the London area, and Mr. Scott Coward in Lancashire. It soon became apparent that the non-Catholic inspectors were less strict and exigent than their Catholic colleagues; perhaps the latter had been over-anxious to keep up the prestige and standard of education of their co-religionists. Whatever the cause, the fact remained that the Catholic schools easily held their own under the new conditions.

The departure of Mr. Stokes was a great blow for the Training College, for he had long been the personal friend of the Principal and her staff, and, indeed, of the students also. Several years later Sister Mary of St. Philip, whose faithful memory had enshrined the sorrow of this parting, wrote: "He had watched over the college with such unflagging interest, his guidance had been so helpful, his counsels so judicious, that to lose him now was like parting with a pilot just as we were launched on an unknown sea."

His successor was an Anglican clergyman—Canon Tinling—who had already been inspector of several Church of England Training Colleges. He presided at the Teaching Examination for ten successive years, and won all hearts by his genial kindness and sympathy. He thoroughly appreciated the great work carried on by Sister Mary of St. Philip, of whom he always spoke with respect and admiration.

The Catholic Poor School Committee nobly met the crisis of 1870 by raising funds for increased school accommodation; the part of the Liverpool Training College was to satisfy the enormously increased demand for Catholic certified teachers.

Side by side with the progressive material changes and growth necessitated at one time by the ever-increasing numbers, at another by the ever-increasing requirements of the Education Authorities, went, as fifty years ran by, important alterations in the educational work of the place. As early as 1869 a systematic course of Science teaching was organised in the college, which the modern demand for "discovery" methods

and individual laboratory practice gradually revolutionised into a much more onerous undertaking than those first examinations in Botany and Physical Geography. Practical Cookery, Drawing and Design, and Kindergarten work were successively taken up; the teaching of Needlework was reorganised on scientific lines; the plain Arithmetic of early days gave way to Mathematics, the plain Grammar to a fairly wide course of Literature; the learning of one or two languages, from being optional became obligatory. To all this, as it came, Sister Mary of St. Philip assented; for all, the Liverpool College under her direction, managed to suffice.

The establishment of the Board School system in 1871 imposed a very heavy burden on Catholic ratepayers. Denominational Schools—or *Voluntary Schools*, as they were to be henceforth styled—were to be built, furnished, and partially maintained at the expense of the religious body to whom they belonged. A certain amount of State aid was granted to them on the former plan of "payment by results," but it was not sufficient for their maintenance. Board Schools, on the other hand, were to be built and equipped at the charge of the local rates, while a further contribution from the rates would make up for any deficiency in expenses of maintenance which might not be entirely covered by Government grants. Thus began the great Catholic disability which lasted till some few years ago in England, and till only some months ago in Scotland. Catholics could not in conscience send their children to Board Schools, consequently they had to provide and partially maintain their own schools without rate aid. At the same time they had to pay rates to support undenominational schools. This was the heavy tax imposed upon them for firmly upholding the Catholic principles, that it is the right of every parent to decide what manner of education his child shall receive; that education is for the child, not the child for education; that the State exists for Society, not Society for the State.

In 1871 the Catholic Poor School Committee urged the foundation of a second college in the south of England, but the Superiors at Namur and Liverpool hesitated, for reasons which Sister Mary of St. Philip explained: "The Sisters have not refused it, if no one else comes forward; but, having plenty on their hands already, they would prefer to see another Teaching Order undertake the second college." After much consideration

the idea of a new institution was, at least temporarily, abandoned, and it was decided to enlarge the existing college. In 1872 plans were made for extending both wings of the building in order that one hundred and twenty students might find accommodation, instead of sixty students as hitherto.

Again and again, as the years went by, did the walls lengthen and widen out, and the institution at Mount Pleasant stretch further and further down "the long unlovely street," till at the upper end it turned the brow of the hill in the fine wing designed by Mr. Peter Paul Pugin and completed only in 1904, the year of Sister Mary of St. Philip's death. And as each building was in progress Sisters and students would daily join their voices in the prayer of the Psalmist, "Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." So through all the changes of the ever-changing years, Sister Mary of St. Philip tranquilly guided her ship through troubled waters. Never did she lose courage or allow panic to distort her vision, as did others, during these many crises. With marvellous alertness and energy, she stood at the helm, scanning the horizon with steady, intelligent eye, steering now this way, now that, to avoid rocks ahead, yet never altering in any essential the course she had marked out for herself. Sometimes men—chiefly Catholics—criticised and blamed her action. She was sensitive and keenly felt being misunderstood, but she could let it pass without undue disturbance; men had criticised and blamed her Master, and the servant was not greater than her Master. Sometimes, too, men—chiefly non-Catholics—reading only on the surface, praised her liberal point of view, her foresight, and even her astuteness—as though she aimed at mere worldly success. Such praise, more trying than the blame of others, was waved aside by a little characteristic movement of her hands and a deprecating smile. But by all who really knew and understood, her work and the nobility of her motives were highly appreciated. Old friends never changed in their attachment to her, and newcomers, won by the charm of her personality and the high ideals which governed her actions, easily became devoted friends.

"There is no woman in England," wrote Father Rowe about this time, "who can be compared with her. She is a grand soul full of ardent zeal for the salvation of souls."

The Education Act of 1870 made a considerable difference to

an important department of the establishment at Mount Pleasant—the Pupil Teachers’ College. This was founded in the same year as the Training College, and though it was not directly under her jurisdiction yet, because of its close relationship to the Training College, it claimed Sister Mary of St. Philip’s special and affectionate interest. Here, from the age of thirteen, girls were boarded, educated, and prepared for the teaching profession. They were apprenticed for five years, and served on the staff of the Practising School or other schools in the city that were conducted by Sisters of Notre Dame. They taught in these schools during the day, and in the evenings they themselves were taught in groups, according to their year of apprenticeship, by the Sisters who were their head-mistresses. There were usually some seventy or eighty Pupil Teacher boarders, whose number was augmented in the evening classes by twenty or thirty externs. According to Code requirements, Head Teachers were obliged to give one hour’s instruction daily to their Pupil Teachers; this was manifestly a difficult task in schools where the apprentices were of varying “years.” It soon became evident that the system of collective teaching instituted at Mount Pleasant, was the only solution of a difficult problem. That it gave maximum results, with minimum expenditure of energy and time, was triumphantly proved, when on the publication of the first General Class List of Queen’s Scholars in 1872, the Liverpool candidates obtained thirteen places in the first hundred, and one in the first ten. On several occasions Pupil Teachers from Mount Pleasant were first or second on the list, and when the Liverpool Council of Education founded prizes for the Pupil Teachers of the city who gained the highest places on the Queen’s Scholarship List, they were carried off by Catholics in nine years out of ten. These successes attracted the attention of public educational bodies to the system of instruction followed at Mount Pleasant; and, as a consequence, similar centres for the collective teaching of non-Catholic Pupil Teachers were founded in Liverpool, London, and many large towns.

When Mr. Mundella, then Vice-President of the Education Department, was presiding at the distribution of prizes given by the Liverpool Council of Education at St. George’s Hall in 1882, he emphasised a fact, perhaps little known now, as then. After paying a graceful tribute to the educational work of

Catholics in Liverpool, he referred to the success of the excellent system of "Centre Teaching" for pupil teachers, a system which owed its inception to the Sisters of Notre Dame. We will quote his words: "The origin of this system belongs to the Roman Catholics of this town. When I was called upon to make a change in the Code of 1880, a change that would admit of the central system of teaching for Pupil Teachers, the arguments that were advanced to me in favour of it were the great success that had attended the Catholic Centre at Mount Pleasant, and the amount of honours it had carried off. I feel it is due to mention this, because in yesterday's *Standard* there was a leading article giving credit to the London School Board for having founded this system. The London School Board has imitated what was first begun by the Catholics of this town, then adopted by the Liverpool School Board, and finally by the Liverpool Council of Education."

The Pupil Teacher system, as a whole, presented many obvious weaknesses and defects. Simultaneous teaching and study was a severe strain on adolescents; the position of authority, the responsibility, and the control of large classes at so early an age were things bad for their own characters and sometimes mischievous for those of the pupils; the mental equipment acquired at the end of the day's hard work, in which lay their main interest, was woefully insufficient. Yet it *was* a system, carefully thought out and complete, and for the long years during which it held the field, it did much excellent work. The terminal public examination of each of the five years of apprenticeship covered a definite and well-graded course. If the syllabus were neither wide nor deep yet it helped to lay sure foundations. Above all, early contact with the children of the poor, and the very responsibility entrusted to the Pupil Teachers, generated in them a love of children, some skill in handling and teaching them, and for Catholic girls it was often the seedtime of an apostolic life.

Though compulsory education was the chief feature of the Act of 1870, compulsion was at first only permissive, for School Boards could not apply it rigorously until they had provided sufficient school accommodation. In 1876, however, after a period of grace, a new Act, passed by a Conservative Government, aimed directly at improving attendance, and also laid down some much-needed regulations with regard to child-

labour. It is strange reading to us, to find it reckoned as a grievance in manufacturing circles, that “no child under *ten* may be set to labour,” but the clause was the subject of much controversy and parliamentary discussion, and it was not without much opposition that it became law.

The new Act also made a relaxation in the allotment of grants, and special aid was given to poor schools in scattered districts; hitherto Voluntary School Managers were not allowed to receive grants—even if their schools earned them—in excess of the money they could themselves provide by fees and voluntary subscriptions—that is half the total cost of the maintenance of their schools. Now they might receive grants earned up to 17*s.* 6*d.* per head on the average attendance, without the obligation of meeting it with a corresponding sum from local sources. The Act was plainly intended to assist voluntary schools, and, if it still left much to be desired, yet it was an improvement.

The year 1882 brought another new Code—the Mundella Code, as it was called—the main provisions of which related to more stringent measures with regard to compulsory education. Early in that year Mr. Mundella himself visited Mount Pleasant during his visit to Liverpool (to which we have already referred). In addressing the students he said, “You have singular advantages here—your buildings, your surroundings, your rooms are all charming. I do not know of any so well adapted for the purpose for which they were intended.” His closing words show how Sister Mary of St. Philip’s lofty ideals were appreciated by all who came in contact with her: “Do not let any considerations make you regard your labours as a mere question of salary. Your work cannot be paid with money. You will have the grateful hearts of your pupils, but, above all, you will meet your reward where you have been taught to look for it—in the life to come.”

All public educational regulations of modern times have steadily aimed at raising the academic qualifications of the masters and mistresses of National Schools. In 1889, Mr. Stokes wrote thus to Sister Mary of St. Philip:

“The most serious aspect of the new Code you and I consider to be its bearing on the interests of the Voluntary Schools. Now the fundamental object of the changes is to raise elementary

education by improvement in the character of the school buildings and the qualifications of teachers. . . . With the teachers no one has such intimate concern as you. For years past, though your College has not furnished all the Catholic teachers, yet you have supplied the greater number of them, and beyond doubt you have trained the best of them. Of the debt of gratitude due to your Community for this good work, I will not speak now, because I am about to be bold enough to say that in the future you must do—that is, you are called on to do—even more than now. Voluntary Schools in general, and Catholic Schools in particular, are only safe when they compare favourably in efficiency with the best non-Catholic Schools. Demands upon schools are now to be raised; Catholic Schools, if they survive the ordeal, must be lifted to meet these demands. The teaching staff will not only be larger, but should be more capable. The head mistresses must handle the higher standards more ably, and above all, so instruct the pupil teachers as to compete with the Centre system of the Board Schools. How can this be accomplished? There is only one way and one Institution and one Community which can effect this object, so vital to the advance and even the safety of Catholic education. If it is done at all, the Sisters of Notre Dame will have to do what is wanted in their Liverpool Training College. It is outrageously impudent, after all you have done, to ask for more. But no one else has the experience, the knowledge of men and things, the capacity and the generosity which the occasion asks. As you value the stability of your good work, and the security of religious education in England, continue to devote all your powers and a large force of your very best Sisters to sustain, and even improve, your Training College.”

All these changes in educational legislation were most carefully studied by Sister Mary of St. Philip, not only in their immediate aspects and consequences, but with that long-distance view which she never failed to take with regard to matters of vital interest to the future of the Church. She would explain them to her students both past and present, pointing out with judicial wisdom the points which affected them as Catholic teachers, and urging them to fulfil loyally their duties to God and the State.

Evidently the raising of studies in the Training Colleges was

impossible unless the Queen’s Scholars entered them better equipped, and the improvement of Pupil Teachers became a burning question in Catholic education, and was taken up seriously by the Bishops. If they were to be prevented from drifting into the mixed non-Catholic “Centres,” provision must be made for them in Catholic Central Classes. Mount Pleasant, it is true, already possessed such classes. But hitherto these had been taught in the evenings by Sisters engaged during the day in the Training College or Day Schools. Now, the increased time to be given by Pupil Teachers to lectures and study meant diminished time passed in the schools; this again meant on the side of the school a double set of Pupil Teachers to supplement each other during the hours of absence, and, on the side of the Centre, a permanent and efficient staff; both alike meant enormous difficulty, anxiety and outlay. But the fate of the Pupil Teachers was the fate of the College, the fate of the College was the fate of the Schools of the poor, the fate of the Schools was the fate of the Faith in England. Sister Mary of St. Philip faced all, met all, conquered all—but at what cost, few, save those around her, knew. Many in high places, who had no inkling or comprehension of these things, yet held her work and her opinion in such regard that when, some eight years later, a Committee on the Pupil Teacher System was established by Government, she received the following letter from Sir George Kekewich, who had visited Mount Pleasant many years before :

“ *Education Department,*
“ *Whitehall,*
“ *January 19, 1897.*

“ DEAR MISS LESCHER,

“ The Lord President of the Council has requested me to ask you whether you will give us the advantage of your great experience, as a member of the Committee on the Pupil Teacher System which he has just appointed.

“ I am afraid it would necessitate somewhat frequent journeys between Liverpool and London, and I do not know therefore whether it will be convenient to you.

“ But I venture to add my own personal hope that you will consent to serve. Your Pupil Teacher Classes, which I may call indeed your Pupil Teacher College, have always remained in my mind as a complete solution, if such a solution could be found anywhere, of most of our difficulties with regard to the

Pupil Teacher System. Probably, however, you yourself would say there are possible changes which would help you in your work.

"If you feel that you can serve, would you kindly tell me, in your reply, what days would suit you best for attendance at the meetings of the Committee?"

"I am,

"Yours very respectfully,

"G. W. KEKEWICH."

As time went on the Pupil Teacher System underwent further and further modification, until finally, when prospective Elementary School Teachers began to get at least part of their education in Secondary Schools, it died a natural death. That, however, was after Sister Mary of St. Philip had passed to her reward.

In 1890 Day Training Colleges were started in connection with the provincial Universities, with a view to putting academic distinctions within the reach of schoolmasters and schoolmistresses. The move relegated the professional training of the future teachers to a subordinate place, and Sister Mary of St. Philip regarded it with dismay; still more did she deplore it on account of disadvantages incident to these institutions as opposed to the Residential Colleges. Many years later, in 1904, she was asked to write a paper for the Ninth Annual Conference of Catholic Colleges, on the training of Catholic Teachers of Elementary Schools; in it she expressed her views on the subject of Day Training Colleges. It was a time when grave fear prevailed among both clergy and laity that the powers given to the Local Education Authorities would, in the near future, destroy the Catholic character both of our schools and colleges. The following extracts from a letter written on this occasion to Sister Mary of St. Philip by an eminent Lancashire ecclesiastic will show at once her conviction of the solidarity between the two, and the weight attached to her opinions in high places:

"I have read with the utmost pleasure your powerful paper. I wish you would have the courage to send a copy to each of the Bishops, not only to those of the English Province, but to the Scotch and Irish Bishops as well; and that you would invite their approval of the position you take up on page two

of your paper, namely: ‘Our residential Catholic Training Colleges are the key of the whole educational situation, the central fortress which should be held firm and strong for the thorough Catholic Education of our Catholic Teachers; no Local Authority should be allowed to interfere with them, no Day College or Hostel can replace them.’ The Catholic body ought to be grateful to you for voicing the true Catholic position so beautifully and so powerfully. We have been waiting long for some such pronouncement. In your admirable paper you give expression to a more confident view of the situation. You boldly proclaim that each of our Colleges must be as truly Catholic in the future as in the past. You still demand its resident staff, its chapel, its chaplain and its religious atmosphere. It is most cheering to find you expressing so powerfully the genuine desire of the whole Catholic body. Could you not get the Bishops of the three countries, the Catholic members for English constituencies, and Mr. John Redmond, the Chairman of the Irish Catholic party, to endorse your truly Catholic views? I think you could; I am convinced that every Bishop and every Member of Parliament to whom you send a copy of your paper will be only too glad to be identified with your truly Catholic principles, and with the uncompromising position you have taken up in respect to our future Colleges and Schools.”

Nevertheless, the existence of Day Training Colleges, brought about, in the long run, a modification in the system of training at Mount Pleasant. This new departure was admitted just a year before Sister Mary of St. Philip’s death, when, for the first time, a small number of the King’s Scholars were allowed to attend the Degree Courses at the Liverpool University instead of following the ordinary syllabus laid down by Government—admitted, be it noted, not introduced, for the measure was not initiated by her. But the ambition of holding a degree, with the higher *status* and salary attendant upon it, had opened up the danger of a leakage of Catholic Pupil Teachers into non-Catholic Colleges, and it was to obviate this that the University Class was created at Notre Dame. By no means did Sister Mary of St. Philip regard the move as wholly desirable. Apart from the dangers attending the courses in certain subjects, she regretted the break thus made in the unity of college life and the simplicity of its organisation. But she swept the

horizon "with larger, other eyes" than most. Her apostolic statesmanship saw that this was the lesser evil; saw that the move towards a so-called Higher secular education was striding forward with alarming rapidity and seized the situation while it was yet controllable. In point of fact she secured that the Degree students at Mount Pleasant should stand on a totally different platform from that which they would have occupied had they attended a Day Training College. Their studies are controlled and supervised, and, most important of all, their professional training is entirely in the hands of the Sisters. On this point Sister Mary of St. Philip held uncompromising views, not solely, nor even chiefly, on account of the risks—very real notwithstanding—attaching to the studies in Educational Theory, but because she realised that the Catholic Teacher must be trained by those to whom teaching is an apostolate, children are souls, and the Church is the great Mother.

Yet, whilst taking up this independent position with regard to so vital a matter, Sister Mary of St. Philip, with her usual breadth of vision, negotiated with the University of Liverpool for the official affiliation of the Training College, but this was not finally effected till a year after her death. Though it subjected her to much criticism, time has triumphantly proved that she strengthened rather than weakened the independence of the College as a Catholic institution. In actual practice this affiliation means that for students the time of so-called "residence" is very substantially diminished. During the first year of the course no attendance at the University is required; both lectures and the direction of studies are entrusted entirely to the Sisters, who are privileged to be responsible for certain subjects, in which they thus become the colleagues of the University professors.

Once more Sister Mary of St. Philip thought the move towards higher studies was neither a mere intelligent advance, as benevolent non-Catholic educationists interpreted it, nor a dangerous concession, as some Catholics had feared, but only part of one aim and action—

"To exalt Thy Name and Kingdom
Be on earth our sole reward."

The momentous changes brought about by the Education Bill of 1902, very generally hailed by Catholics as a long-deferred

act of justice, were not to her a cause of unmixed rejoicing. Her experienced eye divined, implicit in its articles, possible grave dangers to the Faith—difficulties connected with management, staff and building. But, as ever, she faced the crisis with faith and confidence. In the last Old Students' retreat given during her lifetime she lifted the minds of her hearers to the grave responsibility which the changes imposed on Catholic teachers: "It depends on them to preserve the Catholic atmosphere of the schools; to preserve the authority of the clergy; to guard themselves against the spirit of schools where no religion is taught." Descending to the smallest details, she urged upon them "to be far more careful about religious instruction; to keep up the observance of Church Festivals; to invite the priest to come into the school as often as possible and to show him great respect; to help in Sunday Schools, Confraternities and Guilds, to set an example in frequentation of the Sacraments and daily attendance at Mass where possible; to attend especially to the preparation of children for Confessions, first Communion and Confirmation; to look after Catholic children who are going to what are now called Provided Schools;¹ to disseminate Catholic books, papers and leaflets."

It was their duty, she continued, to make their schools at least as efficient as those that are non-Catholic; and therefore also they must continue their studies and aim at constant self-improvement, at obtaining the qualifications which would make them respected; they must show themselves equal, if not superior to non-Catholic teachers in intellectual qualifications, in trustworthiness, steadiness, refinement. "Enter into no disputes or quarrels with non-Catholics; but impress upon yourselves strongly that while it is quite right you should be paid as others are, there should be in you no mercenary spirit. Let there be no talking or acting as if salary were the only or the main consideration, but let your high-minded and unselfish bearing in this respect prove to the world the beauty of Catholic ideals."

We have briefly outlined some of the more important changes in elementary education in England during the long years in which Sister Mary of St. Philip guided the destiny of Our Lady's Training College, and we have tried to show the wisdom and prudence of her action; perhaps this is best summed up in the

¹ This term replaced the older "Board Schools."

words of the devoted Chaplain of the College, the Rev. T. J. Walshe, who wrote thus to her: "If I may anticipate what will be said of you in time to come, I feel it will be this—that whilst you were ever most careful to be on the high side, to use your strength and influence for the safeguarding of the Faith and Virtue, you were at the same time broad and generous in your views, with the result of a far greater increase of God's glory and the strengthening of the bonds of charity." To this high tribute we need but add that it describes one who spent all her powers, all her talents, nay her very self, in extending Christ's Kingdom on earth. Truly may we say—in the noblest sense of the phrase—that her life was passed "On His Majesty's Service."

CHAPTER X

"EDUCATION FOR LIFE ETERNAL"

"They who instruct many unto justice shall shine as stars for all eternity."—DANIEL xii. 3.

"You cannot give what you have not got," was a reminder that often fell from the lips of Sister Mary of St. Philip, when speaking to her students of their future responsibility as Catholic teachers. To deepen their spiritual life, to raise their spiritual aims, to broaden their spiritual sympathy—this was her one desire.

"Remember," she would say to those first students, "that you have been called like the Apostles to a life of noble work, and now that you stand on the threshold, be earnest and enthusiastic. Think often of your future, and fill your minds with a sense of its great responsibilities. Then, full of courage, go forth to meet them." The apostolic spirit was certainly strong in these earliest students of Mount Pleasant. There was a single-heartedness in their devotion to their work, a great love of poor children, and an ever-increasing realisation of their responsibility in the sight of God for souls entrusted to their care—the consciousness, in fact, of vocation. "You are going out to do God's work—to save souls," she impresses upon them; "the children you are going to teach will be the Catholic men and women of the future, and everything depends upon the training they receive at your hands." Some years later, when the spirit of unrest was beginning to show itself, even in her quiet College, she said to her Second Year students with almost pathetic earnestness: "Remember there are more important things than money. We have not given up our lives to the work of making you teachers, merely that you may gain good salaries and make a name for yourselves in the world of Education. Catholic teachers must never forget that their children have souls, and that they must answer to God for the teaching and example they give them."

It is almost superfluous to say that the place of honour among studies was always given to Religion. Sister Mary of St. Philip's zeal for "the better gifts" caused her from the very earliest days to arrange for courses of lectures or lessons in Christian Doctrine to be given to the students by pious and learned priests such as Canon Bennett, who was later to die a martyr of charity, and Father Carr, afterwards Domestic Prelate to His Holiness and Vicar-General—the life-long friend of the College and of Sister Mary of St. Philip. Canon Bennett loved to inspire the students with his own favourite devotion, prayer of thanksgiving, and it was he who taught them his constant ejaculation: "Praised, blessed, adored, and glorified be the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar." Sister Mary of St. Philip recited this prayer at the opening of each lesson, and the custom obtains to this day.

Through all the steady work and joyous play of College life, unifying them and giving them their meaning, ran like a golden thread her tender, solid, and most childlike piety. The Foundress of the Institute of Notre Dame, Blessed Julie Billiart, had said of old to her daughters: "No little *dévotés*, I beg; we want great souls in our day if they are to persevere in good." Filled with her spirit, Sister Mary of St. Philip inculcated not mere pious practices, but a life of piety, part and parcel of the daily life of the College and of the apostolic future with which this life was one. She loved the Liturgy, and she strove to make it known and loved by her girls. The round of the Church's year was followed out in exhortations and novenas and special customs instituted by her. She had a wonderful gift, not only for giving the initial impulse to spiritual fervour at holy times and seasons, but of securing its maintenance at a white heat until their close. Year after year the Month of Mary was celebrated with great pomp and a hundred stimulating industries. On the eve of the first day, she would rouse enthusiasm, and ask the students to spend the month in great fervour and love for Our Lady. Yet, in the words of the Act of Consecration, she would remind them that this devotion was to extend "not for a month only, but for time and eternity." And she would quote those well-known lines of Cardinal Newman—

"And we give to her May,
Not because it is best,
But because it comes first,
And is pledge of the rest."

Every day in May, after breakfast or dinner, the girls would go with Sister Mary of St. Philip on various short pilgrimages to the shrines in the garden, beginning always with that of Our Lady of Victories, the gift of her first students in 1857. On the first Saturday of the month took place the great pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour in the Church of the Redemptorist Fathers at Bishop Eaton. On this morning the students were awakened, very characteristically, by the call “ Pilgrims, arise ! ” to which they responded “ In the Name of the Lord.” The expedition began at 6 a.m. and, once out of the city, the pilgrims recited the Rosary aloud, along the lanes and fields, led by Sister Mary of St. Philip. Then there was the early Mass in the devotional church, during which May hymns were sung by enthusiastic young voices, and afterwards prayers and candles were offered at Our Lady’s shrine. It all sounds cold on paper, but it will be one of the sweetest memories in the hearts of countless students of Our Lady’s Training College.

Holy Week brought *Tenebræ*, Holy Thursday its procession and devotions, and Good Friday left an indelible impression on the hearts of all. From 12.30 to 8 p.m. in the hush of the partially darkened Lady Chapel, with the large crucifix in the sanctuary, Sister Mary of St. Philip drew the minds and hearts of her girls to the contemplation of Christ’s sufferings, by alternated readings, prayers, and hymns, in carefully ordered sequence. It was wonderfully beautiful and devotional. No one present could ever forget her voice and intonation in certain passages from *The Foot of the Cross* ; her simplicity and sincerity moved the dullest soul.

The Feast of Our Lady’s Dolours, dear to her from her girlhood, was always celebrated by the torchlight procession, which still lives among College customs, when all the garden walks were lined out in light from Chinese lanterns and hanging lamps, and the Calvary and *Pietà* were ablaze with candles; when, as the evening *Angelus* rang, the entire household came out bearing lighted tapers, paper-shaded after the fashion of Lourdes; when Sister Mary of St. Philip at the head of the long line and holding her rosary of the Dolours, as her manner was, at arm’s length, said it aloud, the mysteries being punctuated by the singing of verses from the *Stabat Mater*. On one occasion a girl of sceptical tendencies and little piety joined

the procession in a somewhat disdainful and mocking mood, but she confessed later that the sight of Sister Mary of St. Philip's earnestness and simple devotion made her feel so small that she "who came to scoff remained to pray."

Hymns played a large part in the devotional life of the College. The liturgical hymns naturally occupied the place of honour, and before every examination the students invoked the light of the Holy Ghost in singing the *Veni Creator Spiritus*; the *Ave Maris Stella* was another favourite. Father Faber's hymns, as one would naturally expect, were in frequent use. Then, too, there were hymns specially written for the students, either by Sister Mary of St. Philip herself, or by one of the College staff, notably by Sister Mary Xavier, whose "Mother of Christ" is sung even in far distant lands. These College hymns crystallise some devotion or religious ideal which Sister Mary of St. Philip wished to plant deep in the hearts of her students. Her own burning zeal for souls is expressed in her hymn to the Sacred Heart—

"Not from thought of selfish interest
Will we toil for Thee, O Lord:
To exalt Thy Name and Kingdom
Be on earth our sole reward."

Her intense love of Mary is summed up in her exhortation "Love Our Lady, she will draw you closer to Our Lord. You will find the Child with Mary His Mother." And her students still remember this when they sing—

"Mother of Christ, Mother of Christ,
I toss on a stormy sea,
Oh, lift thy Child as a beacon light
To the port where I fain would be.
And Mother of Christ, Mother of Christ,
This do I ask of thee,
When the voyage is o'er, oh, stand on the shore,
And show Him at last to me."

The hymn to the Infant Jesus, which the students always sing on the twenty-fifth of each month, was written by Sister Mary of St. Joseph. It, too, is a prayer of petition, for the apostolic spirit, an act of self-oblation in the interest of a great cause—

"Let every labour be for Thee:
For Thee each sorrow and each pain,
For Thee each joy and happiness,
For Thee each little soul we gain."

Oh, let Thy weakness be our strength,
Thy lowliness our only stay :
Oh, let Thy ardent love for souls
Grow in our hearts from day to day.”

In hymns such as these did Sister Mary of St. Philip and her colleagues strive to lift up the hearts of their pupils to higher things, to sustain and encourage them in the hard life on which they were about to embark. Some hymns, such as *Mater Admirabilis*, *Regina Apostolorum* and *Janua Cæli*, were written with special references to time, place and circumstance, which made them unsuitable for general use. Past students, however, whose love for the things of College days outran their discrimination, sometimes taught such hymns in parish churches; thus we have heard of a mixed congregation singing with vigour and devotion—

“ Gentle Mother to thy keeping
Take our wayward maidenhood,
Let us pass our years of training,
As thou meanest that we should.”

Of course it was all very incongruous, but Our Lady would have understood, and Sister Mary of St. Philip, had she been present, would have smiled, and noted it in her book of memory for the delectation of future students. Eager and ingenious as she was in inventing pious “industries” to stimulate devotion in her girls, yet she was anxious to preserve all that was precious, or sacred in the past. So she would counsel the students to keep up the practice of singing such old hymns as “Hail, Queen of Heaven.” “For, my dears,” she would say, “there may be some old sinner in the congregation, who has come not to pray, but to see his child in her new white frock, and if he hears the children singing, as he once sang when an innocent child—

‘ Mother of Christ, Star of the Sea,
Pray for the sinner, pray for me,’

the familiar words will touch his heart as no new hymn, however beautiful, could do.” An old student wrote long years after she had left College: “When I look back on my past life, I realise that some of the most fervent prayers I have ever said were the hymns I sang as a student.”

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The special devotions to the Infant Jesus on the twenty-fifth of each month are of long-standing observance in Our Lady's Training College. "We learnt this devotion," said Sister Mary of St. Philip, "from the Redemptorist Fathers. It is a special devotion with them, and we adopted it many years ago when one of the Fathers gave a retreat here. It is meant to help the Second Year students for their immediate future." The twenty-fifth of the last month of the College year was a memorable day for those who were about to begin their professional career. Sister Mary of St. Philip assembled them to make the following act of consecration to the Divine Child, and to each she gave a printed copy of the words, in the hope that they might say it every day, or at least read it on the twenty-fifth of each month, and thus renew the high aspirations with which they began their apostolate: "Sweet Child Jesus, eternal God made an Infant for love of us, to Thee do I offer all the little children whom, for Thy love, and in honour of Thy holy Childhood, I will devote my whole strength to instruct and save. Grant that I may ever behold Thee in the children entrusted to my care, and that no act or word of mine may scandalise Thy little ones. Bestow on me some share of the virtues of Thy holy Childhood, especially Thy meekness, humility and simplicity. Give Thy blessing to my labours, and bring me safely hereafter to that happy day when surrounded by the souls I have tried to save, I may sing with them for ever the canticles of the blessed. Amen."

The Sodality of Our Lady is almost as old as the College itself, and the recitation of the Little Office of the Immaculate Conception on Saturday, and the singing of the Litany of Loreto in the corridor on the way to supper were all initiated by Sister Mary of St. Philip. The love of Our Lady was and *is*—for these things, thank God, have become a tradition—the guiding star which led the students to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, the end and crown of all. Sister Mary of St. Philip's devotion to the Hidden Presence was both deep and tender. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was her strength and her stay. Nor could she understand the lukewarmness of those who, knowing and believing, neglected to assist at it daily. Nothing roused her indignation more than to hear that, through sloth or carelessness, old students contented themselves with hearing Mass but once a week. She knew well that compulsion

in the matter of devotion is undesirable for many reasons; hence she allowed a wise liberty with regard to religious matters that were not of obligation, but she strove to excite in her girls that spiritual hunger of soul, that active love of the heart which is so beautifully expressed in her favourite prayer, “Dearest Jesus, teach me to be generous, to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labour and not to ask for any reward, save to know that I do Thy Will, O my God.” She who could say this prayer with all sincerity would need little compulsion to induce her to make Mass and Holy Communion her spiritual mainstay. Of course, the practice of daily Communion was not then as general as now, but, even in those days, there were a number of students who rose from their beds on several mornings a week—at what some of their companions deemed an unearthly hour—in order that they might receive Holy Communion with the Sisters at six o’clock. No one, needless to say, urged them to this, no one commented on their act of fervour. In the same way the students were always at liberty, if they wished, to spend part of their evening recreation time in chapel. Few, if any, omitted this act of homage to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. And the custom, instituted, like so many others, by Sister Mary of St. Philip, lives on, giving to countless souls the habit of seeking help and comfort there “where the mind is filled with grace and a pledge of future glory is given to us”—

“ Still, as of old, is the King’s own tent
With its red lamp glimmering bright,
Still, as of old, the regiments press
Round His feet at the fall of night.”

She loved to make the goal of the students’ walks a visit to the Blessed Sacrament in some church—in Lent always that where the *Quarant Ore* exposition was taking place; and the students esteemed it a great privilege to watch before the Blessed Sacrament during Maundy Thursday night and on the nights of *Quarant Ore* in the Convent Chapel. The whole atmosphere of the College was religious, but there was nothing irksome about it. Sister Mary of St. Philip knew that though the human heart cannot be compelled to love, yet love may compel it to do great and wonderful things. To make others know Christ was her one aim, her one endeavour, for she realised

from her own experience that to know Him more clearly was to love Him more dearly, and that the soul in which this love was rooted would, as a natural consequence, strive to follow Him more nearly.

But she realised that there are souls whom God calls to closer union with Himself, and that these require special care and guidance. Without appearing to study her students closely, and certainly without any intrusion on their spiritual privacy, she seemed to have a quite remarkable knowledge of their individual characters. It may have been natural intuition born of wide sympathies, or it may have been, in later years, the result of long experience. It was probably part of both, though at times it seemed greater than either. The opportunity of making a short morning meditation was offered to those students who were courageous enough to rise from their beds about a quarter of an hour before the regular time. These zealous souls assembled in the Lady Chapel, where they were joined by Sister Mary of St. Philip, who gladly went through the points of a simple meditation with them, initiating them into the sweet secrets of mental prayer. Many other lessons would follow in the crowded day, but none would linger so long, and with such fragrant memory as that first early morning lesson when Christ Himself taught His children the wonderful ways of His love with men. Sometimes Sister Mary of St. Philip would read the points from a printed book, more often she spoke simply from her heart on some spiritual truth or incident. A student used to relate in after days how, during one of these informal meditations, a ray of divine light illumined her mind, and she heard within herself the imperative call of Christ to higher things. Her response was instant and generous, and she left the chapel absorbed in the joy of her sacrifice. In the corridor she saw Sister Mary of St. Philip; their eyes met; the student said nothing, but Sister Mary of St. Philip divined what had happened. "Ah," she said gently, "then it was for you, my dear. Pray about it during Mass." That student became a Sister of Notre Dame, and her holy and useful life was crowned by a holy and happy death. Her early training in the ways of intimate intercourse with God must often have helped her along the thorny road of perfection, and she never forgot her debt to Sister Mary of St. Philip.

The first great event after the midsummer vacation was the

annual retreat. In her familiar conferences, Sister Mary of St. Philip urges the students to pray hard during this time of special grace that they may know what is wanting in themselves, and that they may have courage to overcome the fault or weakness, whatever it may be. “ Make the retreat,” she says, “ as an introduction, a prelude, to a life of zeal and self-sacrifice for souls. I think that, like the knights of old, teachers should go through a ceremony of dedication, and pledge themselves solemnly to God’s service.” And again: “ The retreat is a good time for settling your conscience. Sometimes I find that certain girls have a very misty idea of what is right or wrong. Those who are to be teachers must dissipate all such mistiness, otherwise they cannot act on fixed principles. ‘ I have never thought about principles,’ they confess. But a girl who so thinks and speaks is not worthy of being a teacher. You will find that the battle is generally between ‘ ought ’ and ‘ like.’ ‘ I should *like* to do it, but I *ought* not to do it.’ There is no hesitation with a girl of high principles—‘ *ought* ’ has an easy victory. On the other hand, with the poor waverer who hesitates, ‘ *like* ’ is generally victorious, and for some the loss of a single battle like this is the beginning of the downward course. Some of you realise the danger, for you have been warned by your good mothers. Others are spoiled children and think ‘ It is nuns’ talk; they would like us all to be nuns.’ I assure you we should not like it at all. Our aim is not to make you nuns, but to make you good Christian women of the world. I do not even tell you that the world is a very dreadful place—I never found it so. I found nothing but goodness in it, and I know of no reason why you should not lead good lives in it, and save your souls, if you will learn to act from high principles. Now is your time for spiritual stock-taking. Examine yourselves during the days of retreat, and see what God asks of you. Some of you may be called to serve Him in the religious state, but all of you have been called to serve Him in the apostolic life of teaching. Make your immediate preparation now.” In this wise did she encourage her children to profit by the special opportunities of grace offered to them in the silence and solitude of a spiritual retreat.

All her spiritual conferences and instructions were remarkable for their practical tone. Sentimentality was abhorrent to her at all times, and her piety was as vigorous and healthy

as it was tender and deep. Her devoted love of the Church would not allow her to hold in light esteem the least of its ordinances or customs. "Teach your children the devotions approved by the Church," she would often say, "they are always safe, and there are enough for every variety of temperament. Some people are always seeking for novelties, even in devotions, and there is danger in this tendency. Do not encourage it in yourselves or in your children. Remember, too, that pious practices are not ends in themselves; they are but means to the great end we have in view—the real Catholic life, which should be the copy, according to each one's measure, of Christ's life; for He came on earth to teach us how to live, as well as how to die." On another occasion she tells them: "The character I like to see in a student is rather rare. Every year, indeed, I find some according to my standard, but I want more. I wish you to be devoted, high-minded and sensible. You cannot be happy in College unless you put your heart in your studies, and later you will not be happy in your school unless you put your heart in your work. I want you to be conscientious, to dare to do the right thing under all circumstances. Think all this out during times of prayer, and ask Almighty God to make you good, sensible women."

Religion and piety should make us light-hearted and happy, and precisely because the atmosphere of the Training College was so strongly and sweetly religious, it diffused brightness and happiness around. She would have her students live in the spirit of Father Faber's hymn—

"If our love were but more simple,
We should take Him at His word,
And our lives would be all sunshine
In the sweetness of our Lord."

Inspectors and visitors, no matter of what religious denomination they might be, always remarked on the bright faces of the students, their devotion to the interests of the College, and the active charity which was their strong bond of union. Generosity with God and with each other was one of Sister Mary of St. Philip's favourite lessons. This, she pointed out to them, was the secret of true happiness, to forget oneself in the service of others. "Most of your troubles are home-made," she tells one set of students, "you imagine you have a griev-

ance and then you feel sorry for yourself, and self-pity is a heavy burden. Then you think you are bearing a cross—and so you are—but you have made it for yourself.”

Over and over again she warns them against a tendency to selfishness. “In College,” she says, “each student has to think of herself only, and there is danger of selfishness becoming a habit. Cultivate a family spirit in College. At home you cannot go about thinking only of yourself and your needs; there are others to be considered—father, mother, brothers and sisters. Here you have at least plenty of sisters, consider each other’s wishes and needs. Be on the look-out for opportunities of doing little acts of kindness; give up a book or a seat in the garden, say a kind word, or laugh away some little annoyance; show sympathy when another is sad, or shy, or lonely. I attach great importance to such apparently trifling acts. The unselfish student will be an unselfish teacher, and you will all have to make many sacrifices for your children if you are to do them lasting good.” She inculcated politeness not as a mere lubricant for the wheels of society, but as the fine flower of the virtue of Charity.

Our readers will scarcely need to be told that Sister Mary of St. Philip was the inveterate foe of human respect. Just as the Fanny of olden days went straight to the task which awaited her on the path of duty, so she expected those under her to act solely from high motives, remembering that conscience is higher than consequence. She knew how easily a weak will may be dominated by one stronger; for this reason she warned the students against hastily formed and enslaving friendships. Allusion has already been made to her power of divining character. Frequently, she would discover, under an apparently frivolous or indifferent exterior, latent capacity for spiritual growth, and on such a student she lavished the greatest care. She would see her alone from time to time, point out her faults, suggest remedies, and make her realise that she expected her to rise to greater heights. She knew both how to encourage and how to blame, and if the blame seemed sometimes out of proportion to the offence, yet the culprit could always console herself with the thought that she was judged worthy to be moulded and fashioned by one skilled in the science of the Saints.

“Every action of the day, every event, was supernaturalised,” writes an old student. “God was brought very near to us, and we felt ourselves His dear children in whom He was interested all day and every day. Our Lady and the Saints were friends of ours, whose help we sought in all our needs of soul and body—nothing was too trivial to be brought to their notice. These were golden days, and through the years of mingled joy and sorrow, success and failure that separate them from to-day their memory is rest and refreshment. And always with the memory of the College comes the thought of the great and good woman who was the life and inspiration of it all—Sister Mary of St. Philip.”

That piety which was so characteristic of Sister Mary of St. Philip was the outcome of her strong, living, and intelligent faith. Dogma and devotion went hand in hand, and she spared no trouble to make her students realise the meaning of St. Augustine’s *Intelligo ut credam* and *Credo ut intelligam*. Her lessons in Christian Doctrine were unique—in their fullness, depth, lucidity, piety, and practical application. She gave to them an unfaltering labour of preparation which in her busy life meant strenuous self-denial as well as deep reverence for the things of faith. Her close-written note-books witness to this labour; not only fully drawn out schemes of courses and lessons, not only long extracts from theological and spiritual writers, but whole treatises carefully synopsised, detailed maps illustrating Old and New Testaments, charts and tables of Church History, an entire harmony of the Gospels, besides a perfect wealth of lesser jottings on all manner of devotional and doctrinal subjects.

“Her doctrine lessons,” writes a past student, “revealed to us her passionate love of the Church. I have never met any one more devoted to it. The beauty of its ceremonies and their meaning, its glory and its greatness, and our own privilege in being its servants—how strongly she impressed these things upon us!”

Every year brought for the Second Year students a double test of teaching power; a Catechism Lesson given before Diocesan Inspectors, a lesson on some secular subject before those of Her Majesty. For both these ordeals an organised course of teaching practice in the Elementary Schools, prepared the students, and Sister Mary of St. Philip constantly accom-

panied them to listen to, and criticise, their lessons. Many an amusing anecdote attached to these expeditions, or to the more solemn weekly “ Criticism Lessons ” given in presence of the staff of teachers and the whole body of students— anecdotes that passed into the annals of the College, and were brought forth by Sister Mary of St. Philip to warn or instruct the heroines’ successors. Who that heard has forgotten the teacher who informed her class that Extreme Unction could not be administered to a soldier with a mortal wound because it should only be given to one in danger of death—*by sickness* ? Or how to that other, who had asked dramatically : “ “ If I met a soul in heaven and did not know whether it were baptized or not, what should I do ? ”—meaning her pupils to suggest that she should look for the *mark* left by the Sacrament—a small theologian replied with decision : “ I would say, ‘ Soul, if thou art not already baptized, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.’ ”

One day a student giving a criticism lesson on *Heaven*, had been describing it in the stereotyped way, dwelling with much solemnity on the happiness of sitting on thrones, sceptred and crowned, and ceaselessly singing the praises of God. Suddenly Sister Mary of St. Philip’s quick eye espied a little maid on the point of tears. She leaned forward from her high desk in her sympathetic way and said : “ What is it, dear ? Don’t you like it ? ” “ I thought,” quavered the little one, “ I thought, Sister, we would be always flyin’ in and out.” “ So you will, dear, if you want to ; in Heaven you can do just what you like best,” and the child smiled back a relieved and grateful smile to the genial face above her.

One point in which Sister Mary of St. Philip always insisted was the necessity of uniting sacrifice with prayer. Apart from the value of mortification as a spiritual discipline, she esteemed it as a proof of love. She held that love is shown by deeds rather than by words, and both by precept and example she spurred her students on in the path of self-conquest and self-sacrifice. But, practical and sensible as she ever was, she took care to point out to them that fidelity to the duties of one’s state of life is the best and highest form of mortification. Other forms may follow, but this is the essential beginning. She constantly urged them to make perfection in little things their daily mortification. Before Lent she reminds them : “ Lent

is of course a time of penance, but our penances should be cheerfully done. 'God loves a cheerful giver,' so we wish to see no solemn faces. We have extra Benedictions during Lent, and we visit the different churches in the city where the Blessed Sacrament is exposed. Do not neglect these opportunities of extra prayer—pray for those outside the Church, for those who are in danger of neglecting their Easter duties, for all poor sinners, for the sick and dying. But remember that our Lord hears and answers very readily those prayers that are accompanied by mortification. You have read how, when the Apostles had tried in vain to cast a devil out of a boy, Christ explained that some evil spirits could not be cast out except by prayer and fasting. You are not allowed to fast, but you can mortify yourselves in so many little ways. Some of you indeed might make up your minds to settle down and conquer your home-sickness; say to yourselves: 'I can endure this, and even more, in order to have something to offer to our Lord.' Then you have your study—a very good mortification for some; and silence at the right times—always a difficulty for our sex, they say—I suppose young men and boys keep silence perfectly! And there are acts of kindness which are very often acts of self-denial at the same time; these are doubly precious when they are done unobtrusively, so that the recipient does not know to whom she is indebted."

But precept alone would have made but a fleeting impression on Sister Mary of St. Philip's hearers had they not realised in their constant and familiar intercourse with her how faithfully she lived up to the ideals she set before them. True, there were many things in her religious life which were rightly hidden from them, and of which we shall speak later, but there were also many other things which they could and did see, things which deepened and strengthened the intense reverence her students ever felt for her. One of them wrote: "To see Sister Mary of St. Philip at her prayers was itself an object lesson in faith. The direct, vigorous, absorbed way in which she prayed, made us feel the reality and closeness of the intercourse between God and herself. She had not come to the chapel, as we had, to keep recollected with difficulty, but weighty business had brought her there, and that business was being transacted exactly in the same way as her other business, with her whole heart and soul and mind and strength."

“ If I were sure,” said another student to her companion as they left the chapel, “ that being a nun would make me pray like Sister Mary of St. Philip, I would be one to-morrow.” Her somewhat thoughtless companion agreed with her, and though neither became nuns, yet, later, they were both better wives and better mothers because of those “ object lessons in Faith.”

CHAPTER XI

A GREAT TEACHER

“What is our hope of salvation? What hope is greater than that we are the helpers of souls, that we build up the moral character of youth?”—
ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM.

MEMORY dwells lovingly on life in the Training College under Sister Mary of St. Philip's rule, and breathes again the energy and freshness, the infectious enthusiasm, the delightful unexpectedness of its variations, the secure unchangingness of its undercurrents; and lives again in the presence which was the perennial and joyous source of all. It would be difficult to analyse her charming and captivating personality. She was always delightfully surprising one, showing new sides, appearing in unexpected aspects. But this may be said: the many facets, the elusive versatility, were not, in her, complexity, but the contrary. It was precisely her large simplicity which expanded into such a variety of manifestations, even as from the circle are generated multifiform geometrical figures.

She came into the lecture-room for her morning lesson like breeze and sunshine in one; laziness or listlessness was a sheer impossibility while it lasted. Her very attitude was compelling as she stood to write her wonderful *schemes* on the blackboard—the sleeve thrown back, the tenseness of the hand that grasped the chalk, the beautiful script which no other teacher on the staff could match, the historic little joke “N.B. Not to be read,” at the head of the board. How characteristic it all was! And how every eye, of body and mind, followed her till she turned round and mounted that most uncomfortable desk known as “the Horse.” Then, sitting at it, erect and alert, veritably like some warrior riding into battle, she began to teach. Tradition had it that she designedly looked to the opposite side to that to which she directed her questions, so that none could rest on her oars; neither could any escape on half-answers, or assents involving no personal thought, or



SISTER MARY OF ST. PHILIP.

mere reproductions from book. Such a one was certain to be pitilessly run to earth, and forced to express herself in such wise that Sister Mary of St. Philip was satisfied she had made the matter her own. As years went on, other capable mistresses took their places on the College staff; but none taught like her. One who worked with her for years used to say that she never heard Sister Mary of St. Philip teach, without thinking of the words, "And He was teaching as one having power;" yet it was all so simple; nothing salient in language, no effort after effect in presentment.

"Her history lessons," writes one of the most brilliant of the Liverpool students, "were like word pictures from Macaulay. Her enthusiasm and loyalty were infectious, and she could not understand it when the students did not respond with like enthusiasm. One day she announced that she was going to tell us 'all about Montrose.' No wild demonstration of joy occurred. 'Well!' she said at length, 'to think that you could sit there calmly when I say I am going to talk to you about Montrose! When *I* was a girl, if any one had offered to tell *me* about Montrose, this room would not have held me.'"

She could scold, too, on occasion, over careless work. "I remember," says a Sister, "sitting behind the open folding doors while she delivered an energetic reprimand on an unsatisfactory written exercise concerning, if I remember rightly, 'the Causes of Prosperity in the reign of Henry VII.' I was quite new to the work, and listened to her stern rebuke in real awe. Suddenly the midday *Angelus* rang out. Sister Mary of St. Philip at once fell upon her knees, closed her eyes, clasped her thin hands tightly before her breast, and with the utmost unction went through the prayer to the last *Gloria Patri*. I could not help reflecting how lucky it was for those poor girls that the *Angelus* had come in to put an end to her wrath, when, to my astonishment, having made her large sign of the Cross, she resumed her scolding with unabated energy just where she had left off. Long years after, I told her the tale. She laughed and then said humbly: 'Oh! my dear, how I must have disedified you.'"

Apart from her wonderful teaching power, her own culture, wide reading, and knowledge of the world, were a priceless educational influence to her girls, and one which even the

dullest appreciated. One day, in the course of some remarks on English architecture, the precious little Tyrolese journal was requisitioned, and Sister Mary of St. Philip sketched from it upon the blackboard a Gothic pump. The story ran that, at the Certificate Examination that year, as she was helping the presiding Inspector to gather up the History papers, their eyes fell on the remarkable sketch of a Gothic pump against a question which seemed to have no use for pumps of any sort. The authoress, an exceedingly good girl, but of limited capacities, was sent for by Mr. Stokes, and asked to explain the connection of her drawing. She cheerfully acknowledged entire ignorance of the facts required by the question in point, "but"—with a beaming smile at her beloved teacher—"I was determined the examiners should know what beautiful lessons Sister Mary of St. Philip has been giving us, so I just drew that pump for them!"

She was an ardent botanist. The taste ran in her family; the reader will remember the botany rambles of her childhood with her father, and John Pitchford was, in his day, a botanist of no mean order. To the last, a wild flower could lure her from the gravest occupations, and one student whose examination papers at the term-end were the despair of the mistresses, but whose home lay in the heart of the country, was wont to forestall reprimand when summoned to Sister Mary of St. Philip's room, by appearing before her laden with boxes of treasures, fresh from field and wood and hedgerow. All the year round every available window-sill and table in the lecture-room was filled with bottles and jars exhibiting specimens or experiments. She would glide in during the hours of private study with the swift and gentle movement which was peculiar to her, put some precious botanical slide under the microscope, look at it with delight, and then give that well-known wave of both her hands which brought all her enthusiastic pupils down from their desks to inspect it with her. This communicative ardour was the bane of the Belgian Sister who filled the post of matron in the College, and on one occasion she appeared in class to complain that, in the cubicles of the botanists, beans were being germinated in all the tooth-glasses, and mustard-seed grown on all the sponges. How delighted Sister Mary of St. Philip was, and what a burst of young laughter came from her and her girls when she told them of the report!

Then there were the botanical excursions, doubly delightful because often arranged by her as sudden surprises on a fine morning. The unexpectedness was sometimes disconcerting to the uninitiated. "Now, dear girls, I have on my seven league boots," she would cry, and in an astonishingly short space of time she was a speck in the distance. Occasionally, on arriving at the station, she bethought herself of a more attractive goal than that agreed upon, and changed her destination without advertising her subordinates. There is a story that once in these circumstances when all were hurrying into the carriages, a guard inquired of a bewildered young mistress where they were bound for, and that she naïvely replied: "I have not the remotest conception; ask the tall Sister next door." In point of fact, that day the party went to Childwall, and when, at sundown, the long stream of flower-laden girls and their teachers were coming down the white road in the wake of Sister Mary of St. Philip, a little old lady stopped in front of her, and said in an awestruck whisper: "Excuse me, madam, but is it a funeral?" "Funeral, funeral? Oh, dear no! It is the botanical excursion of the Liverpool Training College." Here apparently was sympathetic meeting ground. The old lady drew out a flower from those in Sister Mary of St. Philip's hand, and asked with great solemnity: "And pray what is this?" "Shepherd's purse, shepherd's purse" (still a little annoyed by the "funeral" idea). The old lady was not to be worsted: "*Capsella bursa pastoris*," she corrected, shaking her head, and then, smiling, Sister Mary of St. Philip made fast friends with her over the "weedy trophies."

In the days of which we write, there was a quite remarkable flora round about Liverpool; Oxton was searched for Venus's fly-trap and bog-pimpernel and the valleys among the Birkdale sandhills, as yet undesecrated by railway lines, sheltered grass of Parnassus and orchid and gentian and the waxen pyrola. Who that witnessed it can forget Sister Mary of St. Philip's delight at finding some new specimen? One of the Sisters who taught for long in the Training College, used to maintain that she owed her position there to the chance discovery of a somewhat rare orchid. "I was very young then, and, as my work lay in the Day School, seldom came in contact with Sister Mary of St. Philip. I had been sent to Birkdale to recruit during the holidays, and it was with mixed feelings that I

heard one morning that she was coming over for a few days, as I regarded her with considerable awe. But it all vanished when she accosted me with her charming and affectionate *abandon*, and invited me to accompany her next day on a very matutinal excursion—‘at cockcrow, my dear.’ How well I remember that walk, my first walk with her—her delightful talk, her quotations from her favourite Wordsworth, and then the sudden exclamation, ‘Oh! those precious orchids,’ and her little run down the sandbank into the hollow which held the crimson treasures. And then I—fortunate I—found the twayblade and went up several degrees in her estimation.”

It must be confessed that the time-table for the senior students was an elastic decree. Sister Mary of St. Philip loved to relate how once, when Her Majesty’s Inspector was officially overlooking it, and inquiring whether it was adhered to, and she had airily hinted that, of course, on a fine day, lectures *might* give way to a walk or scientific excursion, he had drily replied: “I see, Miss Lescher; I will then sign it ‘followed weather permitting!’”

As we have seen, she had her own intellectual tastes, her pet enthusiasms; yet no secular subject of the curriculum was ever really to her anything more than a means to a great end. School management, however, which she always kept in her own hands, was something more; it bore in her eyes an almost religious aspect, giving, as it did, such special opportunity for impressing on the students the master-thought of all her training, that the career for which they were in training was a vocation and a veritable apostolate. The first school management lesson of each year opened with her writing on the black-board and requiring the girls to transfer to their note-books the verse—

“Another year of service,
Of witness for Thy love,
Another year of training,
For holier work above.”

One of her hearers says—

“Her school-management lessons, the outcome of her years of experience, of her ever-ready sympathy with all her children’s difficulties and defeats when first they tried their wings, were—well, they were *hers*. No students of any other College will ever have the like, for none of their Principals will ever have learnt

it in the same school, none will ever feel with their pupils as she with us, and no students will be warned as we against every pitfall. The sound of her voice in the quiet lecture room and the memory of her counsels will go only when memory itself goes. And how many thousands of little ones in these islands have been benefited by those lessons! How much brighter and happier has their school-life been than it would have been had she not been their teachers' Teacher!"

Her tender love for the poor and her sympathy with the hard conditions of their home life made her constantly urge upon the future teachers of their children the duty of making them happy. There were to be no unhappy faces in the schools taught by Liverpool students, and the smiles on the faces of the little ones were to be the reflection of the smile on the face of their teacher. Sister Mary of St. Philip loved to quote, and to make her students commit to memory, Coleridge's lines :

" O'er wayward childhood wouldst thou hold firm rule,
And sun thee in the light of happy faces,
Love, Hope, and Patience, these must be thy graces,
And in thine own heart let them first keep school."

Yet her high aims and lofty conception of the teacher's calling, far from making her neglect the details of practical drudgery inseparable from it, were the very reason of her persistent thoroughness in them. With what unwearying patience would she teach the methods of finding the various "averages" from the school class-rolls, what endless trouble she gave herself to ensure that every girl before her had the formulæ at her fingers' ends. As the end of the second year of training approached, how she multiplied ways and means of preparing the outgoing students for their coming responsibilities, inviting in, now the Head Mistress of the Practising School, now some Sister particularly successful with infants, to give them the benefit of their practical experience. All that these could say, she herself could have said, but to invoke the aid of others in her own work was one of the notes of her broad and humble spirit. The importance with which she invested these visits, the courtesy with which she introduced the Sisters into the lecture room and then retired, were lessons in other and better things than organisation and teaching.

And just as she received help from others so graciously and so gratefully, so did she, too, in her turn, give royally

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and gladly. One of her old students wrote of her in this connection: "I always loved to see the prodigal way in which she unfolded the College treasures—methods, notes of lessons, and lectures—to outsiders asking assistance. Rather trying, we students thought, this must have been sometimes to our mistresses, who had to make over to strangers to use—perhaps as their own—the products of their mind and pen; but so like *her*, so grand, and so *unlike* what many others would do."

The narrow absorption which makes some teachers limit their interest to the subjects they themselves teach would, of course, have been precluded by her position; but neither could it ever have found place in a spirit of so large sympathies, and such wide horizons. Hence the support she gave in a thousand ways to all the members of the College Staff, especially the younger and inexperienced—but a support which never in the slightest degree interfered with their personal prestige and authority. She showed great insight in selecting the *personnel* of her Staff, and just as in character she realised latent qualities which needed only the warmth and sunshine of sympathy for development, so in the matter of intellectual possibilities she was equally happy. She discovered hidden talents wrapped up in the napkin of unconsciousness, or perhaps of timidity, and she made the owners use them, not for ambition, nor even for legitimate self-satisfaction, but always, and at all times, for the greater glory of God. We shall have more to say of her relations with her colleagues.

In the crowded curriculum framed by the Education Department were certain secondary subjects, which were apt to have no provision made for them on the time-table, but which had to be compassed at odd moments or in free-time. One chief trial of the English teacher was the recitation by each student of three hundred lines from Shakespeare, and complaints were carried to Sister Mary of St. Philip from time to time of this or that defaulting group. The next day she would appear suddenly in the class-room, armed with a copy of *Macbeth* or *Hamlet*, and promiscuously call up half-a-dozen students to recite their portion; dread of a repetition of the ordeal gave the required stimulus without need of fault-finding.

Drawing was another branch which sometimes required an impetus from Sister Mary of St. Philip's ingenuity. Once she met the teacher's laments of the little time the students

devoted to it by cheerily proposing to the class the foundation of a Free Sketching Club, promising that she herself would take all who appeared "booted and spurred" at six o'clock next morning on a landscape-sketching excursion. The delighted girls assembled in force, in hats and jackets, and prudently provided with umbrellas; Sister Mary of St. Philip then proceeded to conduct them round the convent garden, stopping here to draw a lawn-mower, there a wheelbarrow and broom, keeping all the pencils busy, and enjoying the trick she had played on them quite as much as they did, and delightedly mystifying the remainder at breakfast by glowing accounts of the rural expedition.

Her sense of humour at once served and was served by her perpetual youthfulness of heart—perhaps her chiefest natural charm—and her unaffected interest in small things. "There is nothing little to the really great in spirit," says Charles Dickens somewhere. And so it was always worth while to go and tell her any little class joke, any "howler" on an examination paper, any absurd efforts at "questioning out" on the part of tyro-students; she never thought it waste of time, but laughed with the best of us, and the wheels of work were eased by her sympathetic freshness so that they went smoothly, and none felt the strain.

She entered into everything with zest and sympathy. One year at the Drawing Examinations of the Science and Art Department twenty-five students obtained the full "D" Certificate, as it was called—a record result in the College annals. At once Sister Mary of St. Philip secretly organised with the rest of the girls a recreative celebration of the event. Twenty-five paper crowns each bearing a capital "D" were manufactured, and semi-comic words set to a chorus from *H.M.S. Pinafore*; this Sister Mary of St. Philip taught to the girls during the ten minutes' recreation which broke the afternoon schools, and in the evening the coronation of the artists took place in grand style, she herself accompanying at the piano and singing *con amore*. These things may seem slight in the telling but, for those who knew her, all Sister Mary of St. Philip is in them—her hearty gaiety, her rapid energy, the trouble she would take to give pleasure, the charming way in which she made herself one with her students, and her affectionate recognition of the labours and success both of them

and of their teachers. In a drama by M. de Lavedan, the Prince d'Aurec declares that he will show he can die "like a Prince." "No more than the rest of us," retorts a man of the people. To whom the Prince replies: "*Il y a la manière.*" That was just it; whether Sister Mary of St. Philip taught or played or prayed, *il y avait la manière*, inimitable, delightful, persuasive, nay, compelling.

A Jesuit Father who held her in high esteem and much affection, and who, through retreats given at the Training College and a wide intercourse with teachers, had had many opportunities of gauging her influence, wrote after her death of "the void created by the departure of the Queen-Mother, or rather Mother-Queen." No happier phrase could characterise her relation to her subordinates; on the one side her power, with all that made and ministered to it, on the other her motherhood, wise, tender, selfless, apostolic. Her authority was, it is true, well served by her appearance. Like Lear, she had that in her countenance which men would fain call "master"; like Romola, "that way of walking, like a procession." These things struck those who saw her but for a moment. "What a splendid Lady Macbeth!" a gentleman was heard to remark as he passed her in the street. But they were only the trappings and suits of her power; the real thing was within and made itself felt rather than seen. Her authority, in fact, was seldom asserted, yet more seldom imposed; it imposed itself. Still less, as we have already seen abundantly, was she of those rulers who never, so to speak, dare show themselves in undress; are always consciously the Head Mistress or Superior, who never descend from the pinnacle of position; she was her own pinnacle.

There was the same ease and absence of effort in her government as in her teaching; submission was given without a thought, or, it might be, in spite of oneself. One night—it was in the quite early days—after the ejaculation, which was the signal for lights to be turned out, had been said in the dormitory, a student uttered some witticism aloud. It provoked peals of laughter, and in a few moments the whole place was in an uproar. The Sister on duty in vain tried to restore order, and at last went for Sister Mary of St. Philip. She came at once, listened to the noise in silence for a few moments, and then said in low, even tones: "I have come to

ask you to keep silence in the dormitory." In an instant all was still; not another sound was heard, and she retired without adding a word.

On another occasion the Senior Students "struck" work on the ground that a holiday had been promised them in honour of the Mother-General's visit. When the end of recreation rang, instead of going up to class for the usual Saturday afternoon's examination papers, they remained in the garden, ignoring the summons. Suddenly at the head of the little iron bridge which led down by steps from the College to the grounds, appeared the figure of Sister Mary of St. Philip, holding in her hand a long blue paper. By degrees, the students, curious, sauntered up, and gathered in front of her; then, in her delightful way, but with an authority that meant no gain-saying, she made believe to read out the Riot Act. Little by little, faces smiled and then softened, spirits calmed down, the girls followed her to the lecture-room and wrote their paper. Any one might have done that? Yes, of course; only nobody else would have risked it, and—*il y a la manière*.

But she could be strict, severe even, on occasion, and whenever a principle was concerned. The science teacher, a Sister much beloved of her pupils, happened one day to mention to her class, without any *arrière-pensée*, the name of a rather expensive scientific work. Next day the students clubbed together, bought it and laid it on her desk. Rules forbade the giving of presents by pupils, and Sister Mary of St. Philip, much annoyed, obliged Sister Thérèse there and then to return the money to the donors.

In all her system of government she had in view, not the mere maintenance of order, but the formation of character; and her fine insight, unerring tact, and swift and sure touch, enabled her to take individuals by exactly the means which best suited their temperament or fitted their mood—but also, and remarkably, to reach them when seeming to lay her finger on the public pulse only.

She trusted her students largely and let them feel that she did so, but with wisdom. She knew that all characters are not equally high-principled, and confidence could never be counted on as an abrogation of her own authority. Here are two typical anecdotes:

For many years she herself took the lessons in Scripture,

and, even more than with profane history, treated it with a vividness, a power, and an enthusiasm that held her audience spell-bound. But her lessons were never the kind provision of a banquet to be enjoyed merely; when she closed her lips there came what was known among the students as "the painful sequel." This was the filling up in note-books, from memory or with the help of the text-book, the details of her close-written skeleton *Scheme* on the blackboard—a work often of great intricacy and real personal labour. Now it happened that among the students was a girl who, besides being one of the cleverest of the Seniors, was a born teacher. It was the delight of her companions to be present while Maria taught a class of children, and on one occasion Sister Mary of St. Philip had granted ready permission for all who should have finished their notes on the journeys of St. Paul to give themselves this pleasure. But, alas! the journeys were complicated, and the ellipses on the blackboard more than ever numerous; and one student, specially keen on hearing her companion teach, yet unable to dispose of the Apostle's itinerary in time, borrowed the manuscript of another, and copied and listened simultaneously. That evening Sister Mary of St. Philip called in the note-books, expressing the hope that the work in each was genuine. On the confession of the copyist and some of her fellows, she went round the desks in silence, cutting out the copied pages with her large scissors; there was no comment, no scolding, and no subsequent allusion to the misdemeanour. In everything, her disciplinary action was stamped with breadth and comprehension of individual character and needs. One year she had allowed several of the cleverer girls to keep in their desks one of the Waverley Novels with leave to read it in the time gained by their more speedy completion of set tasks. A student who was far beyond her comrades in mathematics, and to whom much of the arithmetic lessons given in class was genuine waste of time, ingeniously managed to answer questions, when called upon, while reading her *Ann of Geierstein* between times. Discovery followed, and she was reported at "La Salette." Sister Mary of St. Philip knew her *monde*; she at once announced her intention of confiscating not the delinquent's book only, but those of all her fellows, knowing, of course, that the culprit would suffer more in the thought of the privation she had caused others.

Her genuine distress moved Sister Mary of St. Philip to pity, and all the books were returned that afternoon. But, after the lapse of a fortnight, she dispensed the girl from attending the morning arithmetic lecture, bidding her spend the time in private study and reading, which she herself directed. That was Sister Mary of St. Philip's way.

She never, like so many teachers, treated the students as children, and she strongly objected to her mistresses doing so. She did not ostensibly descend to their level; on the contrary she talked to them as if they were on hers, and thereby lifted them nearer to it. Whenever possible she was accustomed to give them her reasons for what she asked or required, not deeming, as might the smaller potentate, that so to do was derogatory to her authority, but rejoicing rather to receive the *rationable obsequium*. All her pupils, consciously or unconsciously, appreciated this respect for them, this courteous handling, as a part of her greatness. One of them—one who only knew her after she had become Superior and therefore much less intimately than earlier generations—brought one day to a Sister, this passage from La Bruyère, as exactly embodying her impressions of Sister Mary of St. Philip :

*“La véritable grandeur est libre, douce, familière, populaire ; elle se laisse toucher et manier ; elle ne perd rien à être vue de près ; plus on la connaît, plus on l’admire ; elle se courbe par bonté vers ses inférieurs, et revient sans effort dans son naturel ; elle s’abandonne quelquefois, se néglige, se relâche de ses avantages, toujours en pouvoir de les reprendre et de les faire valoir ; elle rit, joue et badine, mais avec dignité ; on l’approche tout ensemble avec liberté et avec retenue ; son caractère est noble et facile, inspire le respect et la confiance, et fait que les princes nous paraissent grands, et très-grands, sans nous faire sentir que nous sommes petits.”*¹

¹ “True greatness is free, gentle, familiar, popular; it allows people to touch and handle; it loses nothing by being seen at close quarters; closer acquaintance only brings deeper admiration; it stoops benignly to its inferiors, and recovers position without effort; at times it lets itself go, neglects itself, forgoes its prerogatives, knowing that it can in a moment resume and impose them; it laughs, plays, jokes, but with dignity; we approach it with mingled liberty and reserve; its character is at once noble and facile, inspiring confidence equally with respect, so that, in its presence, we indeed feel that princes are supremely great, but without feeling that we are supremely small.”

As a ruler Sister Mary of St. Philip possessed two endowments, not always found together—complete intuitive grasp of *ensemble* and a marvellous capacity for detail. The former was largely the secret of her power of organisation and ready action; the latter of her sure success in actual teaching.

Her quick intuition, though undoubtedly a priceless asset to her as a teacher, was occasionally trying to those of her colleagues whose minds worked more slowly. An emergency or a difficulty seemed but a welcome opportunity to her to rally her forces for the combat. She gave a rapid glance over the unexpected situation, arranged her plan of action with lightning rapidity, and put it into immediate execution. These tactics often implied a sudden change of the time-table, and she had her own way of conveying to her collaborators any modifications of the usual routine. One afternoon she came into a class-room where the mistress was giving the French lesson according to time-table; Sister Mary of St. Philip expressed surprise. "But it is always French at two o'clock on Wednesday," explained the Sister. "My dear," said Sister Mary of St. Philip incisively, spreading out the fingers of her left hand, and ticking off the days on them with her right forefinger in a gesture that was habitual to her, "my dear, this morning it was Thursday afternoon, it is now Monday morning, this evening it will be Wednesday as usual." Then she added, in her own kind and courteous way, "You don't mind changing, do you?"

Of course such changes were not made arbitrarily, but were called for by the unforeseen circumstances which arise frequently in the best-regulated colleges and schools. Nor did she fail in consideration for her colleagues by omitting to advertise them of such changes, if possible. A young Sister, somewhat bewildered by the numerous and frequently changing plans of her First Mistress, one day said to her somewhat hastily that it was difficult to find one was expected to do on Tuesday the exact opposite of what she had been told to do on Monday. Sister Mary of St. Philip looked at her for a moment in grave surprise, and then went away without a word. In the evening the Sister came to her to apologise for her *échappée*. At once Sister Mary of St. Philip laid kind hands upon her shoulder and said with a smile in which were blended great kindness and lively humour, "My dear, I know I am the most changeable

person in the world, *but that's the beauty of me!*" And it was, for neither time nor time-tables could ever stale her infinite variety. If, however, a matter of principle were involved, as in the case of the "Conscience Clause," then was her fidelity to the time-table, both in theory and in practice, unchanging and unchangeable. But, as a general rule, she held that it was not desirable to adhere rigidly to the machinery of government, since such machinery existed but for the well-being of the governed, and might be superseded under certain circumstances. "*Les choses*," says Mgr. Dupanloup, "*se font ou périssent par les détails*." To carry details carefully through means ceaseless expenditure of one's person. If any one ever gave this, it was Sister Mary of St. Philip; part, at least, of *her* genius was an infinite capacity for taking trouble, and she loved the phrase. How often she urged on her staff, as on her students, to "pursue things to the bitter end," how often did she impress on them that true government lay "not in telling people what to do but in seeing that they do it."

Hurrell Froude says of Newman that he had "the lightness of elastic strength," the same might be said of Sister Mary of St. Philip. Did she want any difficult or disagreeable piece of work done she asked it "in such a sort" as was more compelling than an order; all felt her extraordinary subtle influence and found themselves, often unwittingly, bending to a wish that had hardly been formulated. To her "Old Students" she could say anything. At one of their retreats she wished them to go to the chapel from the college through the garden, a proceeding which she knew to be generally shirked by the more elderly section, who preferred to make their way by the corridors. She therefore gave out at the first meeting that "all the young and good-looking should go by the garden, but the elderly and plain may go through the house." *All* went by the garden.

It was the same with reproof for little human weaknesses which she wished to correct in her students, whether it were some foolish extravagance in manner of dress, some little affectation of speech or pose, some exhibition of undue sensitiveness—she would treat them with a word—or even a look—of kindly humour, and she generally succeeded in making the offender join in a laugh at her own expense. Naturally her strong, purposeful character, her keen sense of the ridiculous

and her unusual gift of expression might have led to harshness and severity in her correction of those under her; but if the temptation were there she trained herself to conquer it by prayer and self-control, and on the rare occasions when her natural impetuosity had prevailed, her humility swiftly made ample amends. One day she had blamed a Sister with some asperity for misinterpreting her instructions. It chanced that the reading at the Community dinner that day was the chapter on charity in Rodriguez's *Christian and Religious Perfection*, and that the Sister in question happened to be the reader. "Sister," said Sister Mary of St. Philip, as she came out of the refectory, "I am so sorry for 'speaking with contumely to my brother!'"

Another side of her lightness was her capacity for coping with many duties at once. Her colleagues sometimes laughingly told her that she was like some skilled Roman charioteer guiding with firm and easy hand his six mettlesome horses, and wondering to see others so often baulked in the management of a single poor steed. Inaction was impossible to her. In her younger days, when the summer vacation came round, she would give lectures on English literature to the Sisters, or go to the kitchen and teach the Belgian cook how to make English dishes. And just as she loved to teach others, so she loved to learn from them. She used to say that she learned either negatively or positively from every individual with whom she came in contact, and she constantly impressed upon her students that they should make every incident an experience to be stored up for future use.

We read and hear much nowadays of new ideals, new methods, even new principles, in Education. Sister Mary of St. Philip, like many other great educators of her day, had anticipated them all in conception, if not in actual realisation. To her, if she were still with us, the so-called "novel" dicta in modern works on education would be mere platitudes, the very alphabet of beginners in the profession. "The school is not for the child, but the child for the school;" we need not further illustrate her attitude with regard to that point, "All education should tend to promote self-activity"; those who were taught by her knew to their cost, if subsequent profit, that the pupils should do the maximum amount of work during a lesson. "School should not be confined within the narrow walls of a

building"; Sister Mary of St. Philip made her students realise that the world was their school, and that every place the eye of heaven visits could be to the seeing eye and listening ear of the true learner, "school" in the truest sense of the word. We could multiply instances almost indefinitely were it not superfluous.

Yet—we would emphasise this point particularly—she held most firmly that in education, as in so many other things, there can be no standing still—not to progress is to fall behind; hence her intellectual sympathy with all new experiments in educational practice, her interest in the work of others, her habit of levying a tax on any and every other subject of the curriculum which would illustrate the subject immediately treated, her injunctions to her students and past students to visit various schools and learn from the experience of well-tried and proven teachers.

In connection with this we may note her large-hearted and large-minded appreciation of the labours of other workers in the field of education. At the weekly Criticism Lesson—that dreaded ordeal when a student gives a lesson to a class of children in the presence of the College Staff and the whole body of second year students—she never failed to remind the critics that criticism which is purely destructive is of little or no value—"if you find fault you must point out a better way." And when she summed up the charges against the victim, as well as all the good points, her own exercised justice was an object-lesson to all. She had pre-eminently that judicial mind which knows how to separate the wheat from the chaff, how to discover the element of truth which lies wrapped, perhaps, in a mist of words, how to allow for adverse conditions and circumstances. Yet she never for an instant lowered her ideals of teaching, though her sympathy would often supplement an adverse sentence with a strong recommendation to mercy. One little practice lingers still in the memory of the old students; in her criticism of a lesson she always discussed first, faults, and then merits—"because, my dears, we ought to leave the lecture-room with our minds filled with kind and pleasant thoughts about the poor student who has taken the trouble to teach for us!"

And, of course, she paid willing and ready tribute to all, both Catholic and non-Catholic, with whose professional work

she became acquainted, either directly or indirectly. She was never in the least tempted to praise her own work or the work of her staff, whilst ignoring that of others. On the contrary, she often magnified the efforts of outsiders and their results, much to the amusement of those who moved behind the scenes, and much, perhaps, to her own amusement. During a visit which she paid to Glasgow shortly after the convent at Dowanhill had been founded, she wrote to Sister Rose, the choir-mistress at Mount Pleasant, that the choir at Dowanhill was excellent, and that the music at Benediction was really exceptional. Sister Rose rubbed her eyes when she read this, for she knew there were as yet no resident pupils, that the community numbered not more than eight, and that but *two* formed the choir!¹

It was ever the same when she visited other convents, or schools, or institutions, she always returned full of appreciation of what she had seen, full of enthusiasm to experiment on similar lines, and full of humble self-reproach—in which no one else concurred—that she was not sufficiently zealous and progressive.

Perhaps this chapter may fittingly close with words of hers which seem the summary of her educational ideals :—

“ An essential requisite for a schoolmistress is love of children—the love that is patient, enduring and understanding. Cultivate a spirit of patience and kindness. Pray for it every day, and examine yourself to make sure that you are improving. Look on your children as souls to be saved, and so to be served, for Christ’s sake. See Christ in each little child, and remember He will take whatever you give to the least of His little ones as given to Himself. Keep your hearts young and sweet, full of love and kindness. Self-control, self-denial, self-forgetfulness, constant practice in these will keep you from becoming hard and dry.

“ Be humble and reverent. Conceited, haughty and self-sufficient people are not reverent; they are centred in self and look down always. It is much better to look up and find something to admire in people and things. Keep your reverence for religion and for all in authority. Never be one of those who are always criticising, finding fault, carping at authority. It is difficult to hold a post of authority without blame; but

it is always easy to criticise—easy, but often ignoble. Noble-minded people are humble and reverent, and they are careful to suspend their judgment when they speak of what they know only in part. Teach your children to be reverent to priests, parents, teachers, and all in lawful authority. But, above all, do you yourselves, treat your children with great reverence. Recall that scene where Christ took a little child on His knee and said to His disciples: ‘Unless you become as this little child you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.’ See Christ in each little child—I cannot say this too often—and be gentle, patient, and kind with each one, as you would have been with Him.”

CHAPTER XII

COLLEGE DAYS AND COLLEGE WAYS

“Quick ! thy tablets, Memory.”—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

NOT the least amongst Sister Mary of St. Philip's reasons for upholding the residential system in Training Colleges, was the special opportunities it gave to young girls to prepare for their future life in the world. This may seem a paradox, but, in truth, a college is a world within four walls, having this special advantage—that its members, whilst mixing freely with others of different character, nationality, antecedents, and training, are guided, strengthened, restrained and encouraged by mature and experienced minds, whose sole labour and delight it is to help their charges to attain a noble self-dependence and—to what is still higher—a noble self-independence. “We rub each other's angles down,” says Tennyson. This process of polishing can nowhere be more efficaciously carried out than in a Training College, where a number of young people are called upon to live a family life without family traditions or obligations, to think of others before thinking of self, to practise the minor courtesies which cost so little and confer so much, to avoid all that may offend others whilst holding firmly to fundamental principles, to recognise that the truest liberty is loyal obedience to lawfully constituted and lawfully exercised authority.

We have already shown how Sister Mary of St. Philip trained her students in the spiritual life, and how she prepared them for their professional career. And now we would fain dwell for a space on that *vie intime* of the Training College, which she accounted as so important a part of the social training of her girls.

For a great many years the College course began in January. The newcomers, the First Year Students, hailed from all parts of the United Kingdom; some had never left home before,

some had been boarders in Pupil Teacher Centres connected with one or other of the houses of Notre Dame, some had been educated by nuns of other orders. For the first few days they were distracted and excited by the novelty of college life, but a spell of home-sickness inevitably followed. Sister Mary of St. Philip was sweetly reasonable with these beginners, and she strove by every means in her power to give them due balance. "We have great privileges here," she reminds them, "we dwell under the same roof with our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. 'Where two or three are gathered together in My Name there am I in the midst of them.' When you all visit Him in the chapel what a joy it is to Him!" Then she continues in different vein: "I know some of you are very unhappy at present, but take courage, you will soon feel at home. There are three epochs connected with your coming to College. The first is rather pleasant; all at home are bustling and making a fuss about you because you are leaving them. New clothes are prepared, friends make you presents and come to say 'good-bye.' You feel very important, and begin to think there is something very attractive in you. The first day or two in College is also exciting; you have to unpack your trunk, get new books, find your place in chapel, lecture-room, and refectory. Then comes the settling down to lessons and the second epoch begins. You apply yourself to your work with vigour and confidence, but—mistresses find fault with your methods, your results, with everything! You only half know your companions, and cannot look to them for sympathy; and then there are the dear home interests just left behind. This second epoch is full of misery and homesickness, but fortunately it does not last long. With the beginning of the third epoch you settle down steadily to work; and you must remember it is all for God. I hope you have already reached this epoch, and that you are no longer unhappy. Do your duty with regard to study whole-heartedly, eat well, sleep well, and be as merry as you like. If besides this you pray well, then I have no fear that your College life will not be a success." Then comes a practical hint: "You all like talking, I know; well now, practise speaking accurately and distinctly. There are plenty of good models here; listen and imitate. Modulate your voices, speak gently; you can be gay and merry without being noisy or loud."

Though from eighteen to twenty years of age, many of these newcomers were in many respects but children. Yet as Pupil Teachers they had been invested with a certain power of authority, which had given them, in some cases, an undue idea of their own importance. The first year of College life was intended by Sister Mary of St. Philip to be a period of character-training for these interesting young people. They had to discover themselves, their latent possibilities, their hidden weaknesses; they had to devote themselves to study, to submit cheerfully to a kindly and well-considered discipline, to discriminate between self-reliance and self-assurance, to cease for a time to play the part of teacher, in order to learn how better to resume the part later.

"Here," she tells another set of First Year Students, "you live with no thought of the morrow. You are surrounded by the Sisters who are always looking after you, and your faults are readily forgiven and forgotten. But when you go out into the world all your wisdom and discretion will be needed, and you must be prepared for that time.

"Self-control and self-respect, uprightness and moral strength—all these are essential qualities of a good schoolmistress. Acquire them now, and leave College armed for the fight. A perfect schoolmistress should first be a perfect student, and a perfect student is a perfect lady in every respect, modest and retiring, refined and gentle; yet, strong in her principles, ready to suffer, if need be, for her convictions, and courageous enough to choose 'ought' rather than 'like.' I do not want you to be proud, but you ought to be conscious of the dignity of your high vocation, and to walk in fear lest it lose anything of its greatness at your hands." She would have them all interested in the house, "as if you are part of the family, not as visitors or lodgers." She asks for love of the College, joy in its success, sensitiveness with regard to its reputation and, consequently, zeal and industry to maintain it. "This is *esprit de corps*," she says, "it is for your College what patriotism is for your country."

Sometimes the students were too youthful in their manner, and she found it necessary to remind them that, at their age, they should be childlike but not childish: "A very necessary thing for students is a realisation of the seriousness of life. You want more character, more stability, more common sense. I

want you to be happy and light-hearted, but not giddy and light-headed. By all means be full of gladness and innocent joy in living, but, I beg of you, do not be frivolous and unsteady. When I see such faults in you it makes me fear for your future as teachers."

After the Easter vacation she expected to find her students more "children of the house" and, at the same time, "more womanly, more deeply impressed with the seriousness of life, and more ready in the ways of self-sacrifice." As Christmas approached, the Second Year Students who were about to leave College naturally claimed the greater share of her solicitude and attention, but she found time to prepare the First Year for the beginning of their year of immediate professional training. "Earnestness is the great thing," she would impress on them; "come back after Christmas in earnest about all your work, but eager and enthusiastic about your teaching. Above all things make up your minds to meet your responsibilities courageously, and to put your whole selves into all you do."

And, when the educational first year was at last ended, she expected her students to care much for the future and prepare for it with serious care. They had now left childhood behind, and were, as she loved to remind them,

"Standing with reluctant feet,
Where the brook and river meet,
Womanhood and childhood fleet."

It was her part, whilst showing them the nobility and beauty of the life before them, to point out its difficulties and dangers also, and she had store enough of examples of every kind from the past. "I am telling you these things," she warns them, "to save you from mistakes that others have made—from want of knowledge perhaps—but more probably from want of prudence. We have so much experience, and you can make it all your own, if only you will believe us."

"Second Year Students are like sisters," she says again, "they have always been remarked for the interest they take in each other. Once at the teaching examination an Inspector who was hearing lessons, told me, with some amusement, that about a dozen students had come into the room—one to put up the blackboard, another to bring a basin of water and others with apparatus of one kind or another. As he waited,

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he tried to guess which was going to teach for him, but they all seemed equally concerned. At last one appeared with no apparatus, but looking a little more perturbed than her companions, and he had found his victim. He was much impressed by the sympathy of the girls, and watched with pleasure the congratulations—or consolations—with which they greeted their companions when the lesson was finished. Wordsworth says:

‘The primal duties shine aloft like stars,
The charities that heal and soothe and bless,
Are scattered at the feet of man like flowers.’

and your ‘primal duties’ here are examination papers and criticism lessons, while the ‘charities’ that you scatter at each other’s feet ‘like flowers’ are all the little acts of kindness, all the ‘lesser graces’ that you practise.” She was never weary of impressing on the Second Year the necessity of high principles—high ideals: “I want you to have real character—real determination and strength of will. Some people have no decision of character and are blown about by every wind. You must have strength and courage to do right and avoid wrong, no matter what the consequence may be. In College want of principle shows itself in little meannesses and dishonesties with regard to study and the rules of the house. They are not serious faults, perhaps, but those who are wanting in little things now will be wanting also in greater things in the future.”

Teachers are not seldom reproached for their lack of knowledge of domestic affairs. If guilty, they can justly plead many extenuating circumstances, yet with a crowded curriculum and a crowded day, Sister Mary of St. Philip found time for her students to perform at least a little household work daily. Then, as now, the interval between breakfast and first lecture was passed in what by a mistranslation of the French term—now hopelessly ingrained in the College vocabulary—are known as *charges*. These comprise domestic duties of various kinds, such as dusting and arranging rooms, or washing up cups and saucers. One morning, in the early years of the College, when Sister Mary of St. Philip was already deep in a lecture on Church History, the Flemish Sister who acted as supervisor of the daily “charges” appeared in the lecture-room, and complained that the dust had not been taken up by the students

responsible for the cleaning of the refectory. Sister Mary of St. Philip showed no annoyance at the ill-timed interruption, but much at the negligence of the culprits, who had to stand to hear the accusation. The plaintiff's zeal for cleanliness, however, exceeded her power of expressing herself in English, and Sister Mary of St. Philip could not but join in the hearty laugh of the students, when Sister Apolline remarked with much indignation that "the dust looked so impudent in the corners." But the work was better done in the future.

Sister Mary of St. Philip liked to impose upon her students the responsibility of performing little acts of service. Such acts were regarded by the students not as a toilsome task, but rather as a privilege implying confidence and trust; in this way there was not only a healthy division of labour, but also an excellent training in the dignity of personal service. And she impressed upon the students that they should afterwards carry out this principle in their schools.

Of that so-called *instruction* hour at seven o'clock which closed the busy day, and has been dear to generations of countless students, we will allow some of their number to speak. Save on special occasions no formal instruction was given during it. It was something like the *Lecture Spirituelle* established in the Little Seminary of St. Nicolas by Mgr. Dupanloup, in which there was never any reading. One thus writes of it :

"A few moments of orderly confusion, a search for work-aprons and work-bags, always passed before the assembly was seated. It sometimes happened that Sister Mary of St. Philip was delayed after the bell had rung. The 'old students,' who had free access to her room at any opportune or inopportune hour, not seldom hung about the staircase and corridor for a few minutes' counsel in difficulty, or comfort in sorrow, which one voice alone, one heart alone could give. Then would our choir-mistress, profiting by these delays, seat herself at the piano, and soon the whole room was ringing with the hymn for the morrow's Mass or for some coming Feast. But as the folding-doors swung open the sounds ceased, and all eyes were turned towards the platform.

"And of what did Sister Mary of St. Philip speak to us at the evening instruction? Of everything—of our studies, of our conduct, of the rules, of what we did well or ill, of what was

passing happily or unhappily in the house; of examinations, of the Feasts of the Church, of new projects for our improvement or our pleasure. Was there one sick? she gave us news of her. An old student in trouble? she asked our prayers. Most of all she spoke to us of the sacredness of our vocation. Was there, perhaps, a distinguished visitor expected—the ex-Viceroy of India, the Chief of the Education Department? she told us all about it and the preparations it would necessitate. She wished us to take an intelligent interest in all that was passing, not only among ourselves, but in the city, in the country at large, in the Church; our charity was to be universal as our faith. During the Egyptian War we were in the Soudan with Gordon, we watched the progress of the Mersey Tunnel, we listened to Gladstone's speech on Home Rule, we opened the Exhibition with the Queen."

Another writes on the same subject:

"It was all so entertaining and so restful for our poor weary brains, that it was a joy to look forward to it. There was nothing dull or heavy, nothing that required undivided attention. We made or mended articles of clothing or adornment for ourselves, or did a little of our class needlework, and listened with restful enjoyment, keeping an eye attentive lest we should miss a characteristic gesture or facial expression. The speaking or reading was punctuated by witty asides, little digressions, humorous personal references to one or other of ourselves, and each of these called for a smile or a ripple of laughter. Sometimes the enjoyment was so keen that there was a general chorus of delighted laughter, and then gentle Sister Rose would look deprecatingly at her, and at us, as if she thought our mirth just a little unseemly, in such a presence. Not so Sister Mary of St. Philip; her dear face would beam with enjoyment of our enjoyment, and then—if it went on too long—she had only to raise her hand slightly and say perhaps 'My dear girls,' and all was as it had been."

Certain spiritual readings, beloved from her own girlhood, cling in every old student's memory to the eves of the great Feasts and have passed into the perennial customs of the College; Heaven, from "The Creator and the Creature," for

All Saints, the "Easter Joy of Jesus" at Paschaltide, and, best loved of all, the charming pages in the second chapter of "Bethlehem" on the bells of the Annunciation, read in her impressive and wonderfully flexible voice as a sort of "tone" poem to the accompaniment of the piano.

One of the secrets of the vitality which Sister Mary of St. Philip's headship infused and sustained was her inventive and unflagging resourcefulness. She had a positive genius for devices which should stimulate to work and interest. For a brief period she ran what she called "conversaziones," which were something of a *bête noire* to her staff. They took place once a week at evening recreation. In theory, Sister Mary of St. Philip proclaimed the topic of the talk on Sunday; in point of fact, she generally forgot to do so, and when Thursday night came would wave all her mistresses to her at the head of the College staircase and, as she passed down, call to them over her shoulder: "Architecture!—we will talk about architecture." *She* could, and did, talk architecture or any other subject extempore; as for her staff, they usually managed furtively to merge their groups of girls into hers.

Of longer duration than the conversaziones were her favourite Sunday reunions; when the whole body of Queen's Scholars met in the Recreation Room after Vespers, and individuals sang, played, recited, acted a scene from the play of Shakespeare under study, went through a French dialogue or read an original essay. We must confess again that her busy colleagues, who were all obliged to attend, did not greatly smile on these meetings, which meant for them both time and trouble. But Sister Mary of St. Philip never spared either of these where the good of her students was concerned, and she could not conceive of any one else doing so. A favourite feature of the reunion, initiated by her, was a "challenge" between the different classes or divisions. She would write off a verse for the champion of her Botany Class, who, while reciting it, threw down a glove in due form, to be picked up by her opponent with an answering stanza; and then the two combatants closed in a fire of mutual questions on Botanical Orders or what not else.

There was the short-lived Fire Brigade, which, at the sound of the three-times-three whistle, was bound to dash forth from lecture, meal, or recreation to play hose on the scene of the

imaginary conflagration, and effect rapid rescues or exits. Sister Mary of St. Philip genuinely enjoyed the discomfiture of her dignified Second Mistress when the shrill call broke in upon her solemn geographical explanations and, like the *omne genus musicorum* in Babylon, sent half her hearers to obey its behest. But the association, though exhilarating, proved too disturbing to routine and, as we said, was short-lived.

When the long summer holidays came she drew up, year after year, the famous "Holiday Scheme," giving to every girl a copy, with public explanation and comment. It was always headed by Father Faber's words, "Remember that in the spiritual life there are recreations, but no holidays."

There was the reminder of daily Mass and Rosary and regular frequentation of the Sacraments; the counsel to be helpful and unselfish in the home-circle. And then came the list of works or pursuits for which the bait of extra marks was offered—labelled collections of plant or rock specimens, needlework, drawings, a French letter to herself or one of the other Sisters, the account of some interesting excursion—nothing very arduous, that would interfere with necessary rest and relaxation, but a sufficient preventive to total *désœuvrement*—all rendered stimulating by competition, and pleasant by the pleasure given to herself. And how fully she showed her pleasure and appreciation! There was always a very special reunion on the first Sunday after the holidays, with a fine display of the work done and trophies brought back, and honoured by the presence of Sister Superior, the proclamation of marks, and the distribution of rewards.

This is perhaps the place to speak of one, who for twenty-seven years, as at once Superior of the Convent and *ex-officio* Principal of the Training College, was Sister Mary of St. Philip's intelligent helper and her close and understanding friend. We have seen that Sister Marie Thérésia came to Liverpool from Clapham very soon after Sister Mary of St. Philip began her great work; and up to her removal in 1886 (when she was named Superior of the Mother-House at Namur), the two laboured together in a harmony which was as beautiful a thing to onlookers as it was a strong thing for the College. Sister Marie Thérésia was herself a person of much originality and power, in every way worthy of her more commanding subordinate, yet offering almost as great a contrast to her in

mentality and character as her short stout person and sedate walk did to Sister Mary of St. Philip's tall, lithe figure and gently swift movements. Certain endowments, however, they had in common, and those of a sort that quickly bring the most disparate together: breadth of view, a heart and mind equally big, and that saving sense of humour, reckoned by Robert Louis Stevenson among the "radical qualities," which both possessed superlatively, and which, be it said in passing, made of Sister Marie Thérésia an incomparable *racontrice*. The two seemed made to complete each other; and it was a standing edification to witness, on the one hand, the deferential attitude of Sister Mary of St. Philip to her Superior, her immediate obedience, her constant reference to her for counsel or suggestion, and, on the other, the affectionate admiration, the maternal solicitude, the large and complete confidence given by the latter to her subject. Yet neither the regard she felt for her, nor Sister Mary of St. Philip's position or talents, checked the little Belgian Superior from administering occasional reproof and admonition; Sister Mary of St. Philip's humility made the duty an easy one. We will cite but one instance, the heroine of which shall tell the story:

"One evening Sister Mary of St. Philip had organised for the students' recreation hour a sort of little art gallery: pictures, prints and photographs had been begged or borrowed and put up round the room on easels, and she amused and instructed the girls, as she knew how to do so admirably, by informal talk and criticism. Suddenly she bethought herself of the copy of a Fra Angelico in one of the parlours, and expressed regret that she had not got it in her collection. I was helping in the entertainment, and, thinking only of pleasing her, and in my eagerness to do this forgetting the prohibition of the Rule to enter the offices of others without permission, I slipped out, took down the picture and returned with it in triumph before Sister Mary of St. Philip had noticed the move. I felt exceedingly pleased with myself when she said to the students: 'Now you see, my dear girls, what it is to be young and enthusiastic. I should not have dared to take this picture down, but Sister N.'s courage has risen to the occasion.' She, too, for the moment had lost sight of the Rule. On the morrow at 5.15 a.m., I hurried down to the parlour with Fra Angelico, to find, alas! the Sister Portress there before me surveying the blank wall in

mute indignation. After Mass Sister Mary of St. Philip met me. 'My dear,' she said very humbly, 'we ought not to have gone into the parlour nor taken that picture without Sister N.'s leave. I was most stupid and careless to forget, and it was quite my fault. Still,'—laying a gentle hand on my arm,—'if Sister Superior should send for you about it, take the reproof without excuse, like a good Sister.' I *was* sent for, and was here again equally edified by the way in which Sister Superior upheld Sister Mary of St. Philip to me, telling me it was her invariable wish that I should help her in every way, but that *she*, of course, had supposed I would comply with the Rule by first asking the necessary leave. And then I received a very mild admonition. But to Sister Mary of St. Philip herself, as I afterwards learned from the dear old portress, she had already administered a severe reprimand, which had been received with the utmost humility and gratitude."

Humility and her strong spirit of obedience combined to make her efface herself and exalt her Superior in the eyes of the students. The privileges she herself had planned for them—holiday or excursion it might be—were always announced as coming from Sister Superior, and any visit from her, whether to listen to a student's lesson or to give an instruction, was invested with the utmost importance and accompanied with due ceremony.

An old student recalls that: "On the day we gave concerts to inspectors or other visitors, it was such a lesson in humility for us to see dear Sister Mary of St. Philip plan out everything to the best advantage, arrange for dear, kind Sister Superior to be in the place of honour, and then go herself and sit out of sight near the door." It was this humility so deeply rooted in Sister Mary of St. Philip's soul which made her later on a worthy successor to Sister Marie Thérésia in her high office.

Concerts were frequently given by the students; sometimes they were quite domestic in character, and then, sometimes, though too rarely, Sister Mary of St. Philip would consent to accompany the singing on her harp. She loved music and recognised its wonderful influence for good in many directions. Nearly every examination day ended with a concert for the inspectors, and the versatile brain and facile pen of Sister Mary Xavier, or Sister Mary Josephine, often provided a topical song for the occasion. Sister Mary of St. Philip attached much

value to "functions" such as these, realising that they accustomed young girls to act in the presence of strangers with perfect simplicity and grace; she herself attended rehearsals, and was as particular about carriage and other personal details as about the perfection of the music. She often used to say that she considered it a less grievous fault for a student to pay too much attention to her dress and appearance than to be guilty of carelessness in this respect.

To the band of students whom circumstances or distance from home kept at the College during the Christmas or Easter holidays, Sister Mary of St. Philip devoted herself like a mother, organising countless little pleasures, which she doubled by sharing with them. Many a College custom attaches to these days—the painting and inscribing of the Easter eggs; the "Petition of Rights" presented to the First Mistress on St. Thomas's night, an invariable article of which was that she should spend an extra hour of recreation with them; the stoning of the "holiday students" with sweets on St. Stephen's night; the Christmastide charades and theatricals. All was planned and devised with the one idea that her girls should miss home and home faces as little as possible, and in all this, as many old students will gladly recall, she was ably and lovingly aided by her Staff.

The evening recreation in the Training College was always a time of perfect relaxation. Did a student want to read light and entertaining literature, she could find books, quiet, and repose in the reading room; did she want to dance or sing, she would find merry companions awaiting her in St. Joseph's Hall; did she want to spend the time in pleasant converse, then she would betake her to the recreation room, where she might form one of the group sitting round the Sister who presided, and learn informally many useful and pleasant things. Part of the recreation hour, as we have already said, was spent, by most of the students, in the chapel, but Sister Mary of St. Philip wisely recommended that these voluntary *visits* should be fervent but short. She also liked the recreation to be general, each contributing to the entertainment and pleasure of all. On the evenings when she in turn presided, she gave herself up entirely to her girls, putting aside all her own anxieties and cares, and amusing them by her play of humour, her flashes of wit, and her wealth of anecdote. And in some way or another,

unobtrusively, unexpectedly, yet unmistakably, came the passing spiritual note, a reference to the Saint or the Communion of the morrow, a quotation from a hymn or poem deftly introduced, an allusion to something edifying she had seen or heard—it was all very informal, yet, when the hour came to an end, she left the students with the sense of having been both spiritually and intellectually uplifted.

In fine weather there were games in the garden, and long walks, either in the country or in the parks. (*The Cloisters* belongs to a later time.) One of the great events of the year was the “picnic” day which was often passed at Waterloo or Birkdale. The students looked forward with keen pleasure to this outing, largely, perhaps, because Sister Mary of St. Philip and the Staff accompanied them. The day always began, of course, with Holy Mass, during which the “holiday-hymn,” *Causa nostræ lætitiæ*, was sung, and after breakfast the emancipated students made their way in groups to the railway station. Part of the day’s programme was invariably a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, either in the Convent chapel or the parish church, the recitation of the Rosary, the singing of a hymn. Probably these little spiritual interludes stand out in the memory of many as the happiest incidents in a most happy day.

Sister Superior’s Feast-day in October brought its concert and dramatic entertainment, and by these, Sisters and students were brought into closer contact, resulting in greater sympathy and affection. The great idea of the stage-manager was to introduce as many characters as possible, hence there was often an army of supernumeraries, and—since the stage had some limits to its powers of accommodation—hence, also a goodly contingent of dressers, scene-shifters, prompters, and callers. Often costumes and scenery would not have satisfied the critical eye of a professional stage-manager, but when the heart is young, it can draw a heavy cheque on the bank of imagination; and the zest of the players inspired the audience with a sympathetic enthusiasm which was quite independent of mere theatrical properties or machinery.

Of her exceeding kindness to the sick it is quite impossible to give an adequate idea. It was in her a natural gift. She once said that if she had not been a Sister of Notre Dame she would have wished to devote her life to the personal

service of the sick poor. She was unceasing in her little attentions to students who were indisposed or ailing, and it was remarked that if the sufferer were one of that very small minority which held her in less affection, her care was redoubled.

If the illness or death of a relative was a cause of anxiety or sorrow to a student, then, indeed, did Sister Mary of St. Philip's heart devise ways and means of comfort and consolation. Her sympathy was of that, perhaps rather rare, type which feels with, as well as for, others. One felt that she could truly say of herself: "I have suffered with those I saw suffer." And she tried to cultivate this corporate sympathy in her girls as part—and a noble part—of that *esprit de corps* which she was at such pains to foster. The joy or sorrow that came to one was to be shared by all. So she would beg the prayers of all for the needs of each; she would expect all to shoulder the burden of work of a sick or bereaved student, and she was particularly pleased when the initiative came from them without any prompting or reminder.

Life in College was a blending of prayer, work, and play—a foreshadowing of the life of strenuous work that was so soon to begin; a training in the easing of that life by well-ordered relaxation, and a grounding in the things of the spirit which alone can give to life its true orientation and meaning.

CHAPTER XIII

SUNSHINE AND SHOWER

"We see Him come and know Him ours,
Who, with His sunshine and His showers,
Turns all the patient ground to flowers."—HERRICK.

At the end of 1858, the first students of Our Lady's Training College left their Alma Mater to set out on their high adventure of teaching Christ's little ones, and Sister Mary of St. Philip followed them with anxious, loving eyes. Now was the time of trial and testing, and now, more than ever, did they need her help and guidance. She entered in a little note-book, happily still preserved, their names, qualifications, the schools to which they were attached, and the conditions of their service. It is interesting to note that they were considered to be "passing rich with forty pounds a year." Sometimes "a school-house free" helped these young teachers to eke out their scanty salary, but more frequently we read "no school-house." Times have changed since then, and salaries have rightly changed with them; let us hope, however, that the apostolic spirit, which gives and does not count the cost, is not less characteristic of the Catholic teachers of to-day than of those pioneers of long ago.

In the midsummer vacation of 1859 the first Retreat for former students and other schoolmistresses was preached by Father Etheridge, S.J., whose thoughtful meditations, pithy, spiritual maxims, and devoted labours were so strong an influence for good in many souls. In spite of her own personal sorrows, Sister Mary of St. Philip spared no trouble in order that the ties of love and gratitude that bound her children to their College should not be weakened by time and distance, and that the old associations should renew in them the good resolutions with which they had begun their life of zeal. Initiated so long ago, these retreats are even now the means of grace and help to hundreds of old students who,

A. M. C. G.
A Voice from Our Lady's Training School.
January 1864.

The "Voice" is tempted to speak again, sooner than it had anticipated. But it is roused from silence by the thought, that it may be of use to many, who are beginning the New Year under more than ordinary difficulties.

The first thing we would say to all is, 'A Good & happy New Year.' May each month of 1864 bring our children & ourselves nearer to that Divine Lord, whose Infancy & Childhood we have ever before our eyes, in the persons of his little ones.'

The New Year is a time of new hopes & new courage, of fresh resolutions & fresh beginnings. Let us hope that all our Teachers have felt inspired to commence or to continue with earnest & undaunted hearts, that glorious work to which the fresh energies of their young lives have been so generously dedicated.

FACSIMILE, SLIGHTLY REDUCED, OF SISTER MARY OF ST. PHILIP'S WRITING.

“Once in a twelvemonth, come what may,
Anchor *their* ship in a quiet bay.”

A considerable addition was made to the premises in this year by the purchase of a large house and garden adjoining the Convent on the western side.

In 1861, Lord Granville, then President of the Committee of Council on Education, came to Liverpool to inaugurate the School of Science, and after his reception at the Free Library, he paid a visit to the Training College, accompanied by Mr. Stokes.

We have alluded in a previous chapter to the Revised Code, introduced by Mr. Lowe in 1868, which formulated the principle of “payment by results.” It was at this time that, with that unwearying personal toil which was part of her character and power, Sister Mary of St. Philip devised a plan for helping the Liverpool students already teaching in the schools. They were as yet young and inexperienced, and they needed help and guidance to face the new situation with which they were confronted. In 1868, and for several years after, Sister Mary of St. Philip compiled and sent out to the teachers in the schools a little magazine containing, in addition to current College news, all kinds of practical suggestions and hints for their teaching, both secular and religious. It was called *A Voice from Our Lady's Training College*, familiarly abbreviated to *The Voice*. We, who live in an age when copying devices are innumerable, marvel at the patient toil of the loving hand which copied, for “snowball” circulation, this little magazine, with its specimens of log-book entries, time-tables, model pages of attendance registers, plans for the order of the examination day, hints for establishing and conducting confraternities, and devotions for approaching Feasts. Five of these precious pamphlets are in our possession to-day—the blue sheets stitched together with strong white thread. Some pages are in her own flowing writing, some in that of her devoted helpers. The ink has faded, and the paper is worn and soiled with use and travel, but these touching relics are eloquent of the thoughtful mind and kindly heart of her who could never do enough for her children.

Every copy of *The Voice* contained some words direct from her own heart, whether verses, as *A Morning and Evening in a Teacher's Life*, or the more famous *Student's Dream*, or

a page of wise counsel and motherly advice. But, whatever the form or the words, the underlying thought was always a message of comfort and encouragement to these young girls who were beginning *the good fight*.

Like all idealists, she was not easily satisfied. She expected much from her pupils, and if they lowered their standard of values after they had left College she did not fail to speak sternly. In one number of *The Voice* she tells her old students of the grief she feels because "the year has brought shadows—not spots but clouds and shadows"—on the reputation of the former students of Liverpool. And after enumerating them she gently and kindly asks for better things: "We do not speak of these things reproachfully, but, as we have said, more in sorrow than in anger; more in a spirit of deep humiliation and self-abasement than in one of criticism. God only knows how much cause we have to thank Him that things have not been worse. And it is to Him that we now implore of you all to turn with us, begging through the intercession of our dear Immaculate Mother that her own children may not tarnish their name, nor lose one jewel out of the starry crowns that the angels are preparing for them."

The recital of the faults which called forth this grave reprimand will show later generations how much Sister Mary of St. Philip expected from a Catholic teacher, and also, indirectly, how much she obtained. We quote her words:

1. Want of piety, manifested by neglect of daily Mass and by passing over the dearest and sweetest Feasts of the Church without receiving the Sacraments.

2. Want of real zeal for souls, shown by taking little real interest in religious instruction, and by not embracing opportunities of doing good in the parish, by attending night-schools, confraternity meetings, etc.

3. A tendency to expect payment for everything, and to look on a high salary as one of the chief objects to be attained by a good teacher.

4. Carelessness in school work shown by want of punctuality, ill-kept and untidy registers, etc.

These things were, indeed, as she said, but passing shadows; there was sunshine, too, in the spontaneous expressions of

appreciation of her students which she frequently received from school managers, as well as from inspectors. Some of these tributes she quotes in *The Voice*:

"I thank you for recommending Miss N. to me as a school-mistress. She is a great comfort to me, and quite a model to the pupil teachers for attention to her religious duties, modesty of dress, and strict punctuality."

And again, "Miss N. has intimated to me that she must resign charge of my school next month. I must say any superlative is inadequate to express the loss the mission must sustain on this account."

We must give one more characteristic passage which occurs in *Answers to Correspondents*: "Is it, ordinarily speaking, a rule that Sister Mary of St. Philip is displeased with a student when she does not write to that student?" *Answer*. "No, it more frequently happens that the more Sister Mary of St. Philip is displeased with a student the more she writes to her. The fact is that she does her best to answer every question, and to write to every one who is in the least trouble. When people are sailing in tranquil waters she leaves them alone, until they strike against a rock. She begs all her correspondents to consider her debts paid by this number of *The Voice*."

There is no wonder that strong links of affection were forged between her and her students, which time and circumstances were alike unable to weaken.

One want had long been felt in the College—that of a suitable chapel. In the spring of 1865 was laid the first stone of the beautiful edifice to which so many hallowed memories are now attached. An appropriate sermon was preached by Father George Porter, S.J.—many years later Archbishop of Bombay—who asked all those present to pray that the chapel might be a means of continuing and increasing the spirit of Apostles amongst those who were called to do an apostolic work.

The chapel, with the schoolrooms below it, was completed early in 1867, and on the morning of February 5 the bell in the turret of the new building announced the approach of the long-looked-for moment when the "everlasting doors would be lifted up and the King of Glory would enter in." High Mass was sung in presence of the Right Reverend Dr. Goss, Bishop of Liverpool, and more than fifty priests attended.

Father Harper, S.J., who preached the sermon, took for his text the words of St. Paul : " All things have been created by Him and in Him, and He is before all, and all things." The preacher pointed out that the building of the chapel was an act of faith, pointing not to time but to eternity. Throughout all its different parts and in all its accompanying ornaments the one prevailing thought was the presence of Jesus Christ. Its centre, the Altar on which He is sacrificed, above the Altar the Tabernacle wherein He dwells, near at hand the Confessional where His Blood is poured upon souls, around its walls statues and emblems of His Mother and the Saints—all speak of Him, who is before all, the Everlasting Word.

This idea was further developed in the use made of this particular chapel—a storehouse as it were, of graces for the whole country, where so many would be taught the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ, and whence so many would issue forth to spread that knowledge over the length and breadth of the land.

In December, 1868, the Training College was temporarily deprived of the kind support which it had received from the beginning from Mr. (later Sir Francis) Sandford, for many years Secretary of the Education Department. He was appointed Under-Secretary of State, and though he returned to his old post in a year or two, it was supposed that his resignation was final. He wrote to Sister Mary of St. Philip to announce his promotion, adding :

" I fear this may be one of my last communications to you. Will you allow me to say how much pleasure it has given me from time to time to be of use to you, and to your fellow-workers, if I have been of use? I have felt it a high privilege to aid, in however slight a manner, those who have given themselves so faithfully and from such high motives to the arduous work in which you are engaged. May you continue to prosper, as I trust that by God's blessing you have hitherto done."

The retreats for former students had been most successful from every point of view, and Sister Mary of St. Philip, whose finger was always on the educational pulse, determined to turn these summer reunions to professional as well as to spiritual profit. With this object she invited the Diocesan Inspectors and the members of the Catholic Poor School Committee to address the teachers at the conclusion of the spiritual exercises.

She arranged at the same time for an exhibition of school appliances, apparatus, and teaching devices, and a discussion on various plans for the improvement of schools. Time-tables, notes of lessons, specimens of needlework, Church and School music, lists of books—all were placed at the disposal of those who wished to make use of them.

The subject of the religious instruction of children received great attention at this time. The whole system of ecclesiastical inspection in the diocese of Liverpool had been remodelled and inspired with new life and vigour by Canon Carr, and at these annual gatherings he and his clerical colleagues had much to say which was supremely useful to the teachers. In the list of Fathers who gave these retreats we come across such well-remembered and revered names as Father Rowe, of the Oratory, Father Thomas Porter, S.J., Father Clare, S.J., Father Reginald Buckler, O.P., Father Loughnan, S.J., and many others. Later, the number of teachers present rose from fifty or sixty in the first years to two hundred.

Anxious to secure the co-operation of the Reverend Managers of the Catholic Schools, Sister Mary of St. Philip sent out a circular letter in which she explained the twofold object of the retreat—to promote the spiritual welfare of the teachers, and to give them an opportunity of professional improvement. In her usual practical way she points out the means by which the managers can help and advance the good work. They can arrange the school holidays so as to leave the teachers free to attend the whole of the retreat. If the vacation commences on the day fixed for the retreat the school can close a day—or even half a day—earlier to enable the teachers to come. Again she shows that where the holidays do not coincide with the retreat, some teachers may be enabled to make the exercises by a redistribution of the staff, or by the finding of substitutes, and she herself undertakes to send temporary teachers if application is made for them. So did she on any and every occasion use her infinite capacity for taking trouble; so did her buoyant enthusiasm make of every venture an assured success.

One great feature of these retreats was the daily conference on the duties of a schoolmistress, given by Sister Mary of St. Philip. Her words at all times commanded attention and respect, but now her hearers were not students in training, but teachers whose experience had taught them both their

needs and their limitations, and they knew what treasures of wise counsel were at their disposal. Many present took down notes of her instructions, and to them we are indebted for numerous quotations, which are inserted here and there in this book.

"Make your religious instruction real and practical," she tells them; "remember that your scheme of lessons is not merely a plan for examination. Your religious instruction is a training for the future lives of the children, and the work of training souls is the greatest and dearest privilege of a Catholic teacher. Never let fear of hardship and inconvenience interfere with your apostolic work. Never allow yourselves to think or be persuaded by others that you are doing too much. Watch over the conduct of your children; show them by your own example what good Catholics ought to be, help them both by precept and example to grow up into good, brave, self-reliant men and women. Do not say 'I do my duty when I give the instruction; if they miss it, I cannot be responsible.' You *are* responsible. These neglected ones need you most. The others have probably good fathers and mothers to teach them their religious duties; but you must go after the poor, troublesome children, as the Good Shepherd follows His straying sheep. Teach them their prayers, give them extra instruction if necessary. Who knows but that it was for the salvation of one of these little ones that Christ called you to the high vocation of being a Catholic teacher?"

Just as she herself watched over the students who left the sheltering walls of the College to begin their work in the busy world, so did she ask of them in their turn to devote themselves to the after-care of their pupils. She recommended the formation of guilds, study-circles, sewing-classes—anything that would keep them in sympathetic touch with the boys and girls who had left school. Modern educationists are rightly proud of the results of organised effort in this direction, such as the various After-care Committees; but, once more, we may remind ourselves that more than sixty years ago wise heads and generous hearts were planting the seeds of much that we are now reaping. Sister Mary of St. Philip realised the special characteristics of the adolescent, with their consequent dangers, and she was anxious that teachers should give young people that moral help and guidance which enables them to

stabilise their principles, form worthy ideals and, not least, fix their standard of moral values. "The few years after leaving school," she often said, "are the dangerous years. If you can guide the children a little during this period, you will do a great work. Whilst they are at school they rely on you for help and advice. Try to retain your influence over them; encourage them to come back to you to tell you of their work and their amusements, and you will be able to help them in many ways. If you can get them to help with Church or parish work of any kind, you will have a good hold on them and they will be delighted to be associated with you in such things."

For many years the Sisters have conducted night-schools or social meetings of past pupils in various parishes in Liverpool, and with the happiest results, notably in the poorest quarters. Sister Mary of St. Philip was always deeply interested in this work, and, crowded as her busy day was, on more than one occasion she asked permission to replace a Sister whom illness or some other cause prevented from being at her post in one of these night-schools. At one time for several weeks she supplied in this way for a Sister who was ill; and we need hardly say that the poor, hard-worked girls fully appreciated their good fortune in being instructed by her.

In order to interest the students in this special form of apostolic work, and in the hope that they might take it up after leaving College, she would sometimes ask a few girls to arrange a concert, or dramatic entertainment to be given to the pupils of one or other of these schools, and great was the excitement of the artists when she herself accompanied them, and formed part of the audience. The performances were, of necessity, primitive; there were no stage properties, for there was no stage, but one doubts if as many happy hearts could be found in the grandest opera-house as were often gathered within the four walls of a dingy schoolroom.

One effect of the Education Act passed in 1870, to become operative in the following year, was to create an unprecedented demand for trained teachers. Instead of thirty-five students who had hitherto been sent out annually from the College, it became necessary to provide sixty or seventy. To meet this sudden emergency the Liverpool College had to make itself elastic for a time, and to throw open its doors to a class of candidates whom it had hitherto excluded—*acting teachers*

in want of temporary assistance to enable them to pass the Certificate Examination. It was a time of many inconveniences and increased labours, cheerfully accepted by all for the sake of the schools that were in distress. To relieve the difficulty of straitened accommodation plans were drawn up in 1872 for extending the two wings of the College, and the building was successfully completed within eighteen months. In the interim some of the ninety students in training occupied the High School premises, whilst the High School pupils found shelter in the Catholic Institute, Hope Street, which the Sisters had temporarily rented. It was an anxious time for Sister Mary of St. Philip, who, even at night, when the wind was occasionally high, was torn by apprehension of what might happen to her "dear girls" sleeping in dormitories protected on the south side only by temporary boardings. However, all troubles were amply compensated for when, in January 1874, the students reassembled in their own premises, where the additions provided accommodation for one hundred and twenty inmates.

Could future events have been foreseen, the buildings need hardly have been so extensively enlarged, for in this same year a new College, founded at Wandsworth by the Ladies of the Sacred Heart, relieved Liverpool from part of the pressure which had necessitated the immediate additions. But still, as the years passed, all this accommodation, and yet more, was needed.

Sister Mary of St. Philip was ever eager to share with all whatever good things were hers. When successful work was being done by others she rejoiced in its progress and promoted its interests whenever opportunity offered. When the Reverend Mother and several members of the staff of the Wandsworth College visited Mount Pleasant, she gave them much valuable information as to the work that lay before them. Our Lady's College was seventeen years old; the new College could gain from its experiences, and be spared the uncertainties of explorers in an unknown country.

A new syllabus of religious instruction was issued in the diocese of Liverpool in 1875, and then, as always, Canon Carr was particularly active in the matter. Sister Mary of St. Philip and her staff, keenly interested in every educational movement, were not less so in this. Through the kindness of

Canon Carr every facility was offered to the students to perfect themselves as future teachers of religion. He explained the scope and aim of the syllabus, demonstrated his own methods of examining—for he was Senior Diocesan Inspector—drew up admirable schemes on the most important subjects in Christian doctrine, and frequently devoted an evening to a familiar lecture on some part of the Catechism, which was followed by an eager audience of Sisters and students.

Several modifications were introduced about this time into the Religious Examination of the students. The three Training Colleges—Hammersmith, Liverpool and Wandsworth—were, in future, all to be examined on the same set of questions by the Inspectors of the three dioceses, and Dr. Richards from Westminster with Canon Wenham from Southwark met Canon Carr in October to hear and mark the Catechism Lessons of the Liverpool students.

The new syllabus of religious instruction claimed special attention at the Old Students' Retreat in 1875, which was given by Father Loughnan, S.J. At the conclusion of the spiritual exercises the teachers were addressed by the Bishops of Liverpool and Beverley¹ respectively, both prelates reminding them of all that was expected from them as Catholic teachers trained for Catholic Schools. "The Church," said Dr. Cornthwaite, "is now in a state of struggle and suffering, and you, as children of the Church, are called upon to suffer too. You must be ready to forgo temporal advantages, such as higher salaries offered in Board Schools, for the sake of bringing up a new generation for God and His Church."

The reader may tire of the frequent reiteration of these elementary principles of Catholic Education, but those whose privilege it is to train the future teachers of youth know how necessary this constant repetition of ideals of Catholic aims and practice is, especially in our own day when so many seem to forget that teaching is not merely an honourable profession but also a noble vocation. Let us look to it that we who are not called upon now to make the financial sacrifices which our predecessors so generously made, may at least emulate them in the matter of personal sacrifice when God's interests demand our time and devoted service.

¹ This diocese was divided in 1878 into the present dioceses of Leeds and Middlesbrough.

The shadow of a great cross fell on Mount Pleasant towards the end of 1875. The Superior-General, who had governed the Institute of Notre Dame for nearly thirty-three years, was called to her reward on October 25. Few have had the privilege of doing what Mère Constantine Colin did for the education of all classes, but especially of the poor. During her Generalate she founded sixty-six new houses of education—twenty-four in Belgium, seventeen in England, and twenty-five in America, including the establishments of California and Guatemala. England owes its communities of Notre Dame entirely to her, for it was she who sent the first colony of Sisters to Penrhyn in Cornwall in 1845. Indefatigable in her labours, she was able until the end of her long and useful life to grasp every detail of the vast organisation at the head of which Divine Providence had placed her. Although her health had been failing for years, her courage never gave way, and she may be said to have died at her post, and in the midst of her work.

In no part of her flock did Mère Constantine take a deeper or warmer interest than in the Training College, where she spent several weeks of happy memory in the summers of 1857, 1860, 1868, and 1867. Sister Mary of St. Philip, when a novice at Namur, had come into frequent contact with her holy Mother-General, and, like every one else, held her in deep and loving reverence.

The new Mother-General, elected in the following December, was Mère Aloysie Mainy, the Superior of the Mother-House, in which important post she was succeeded by Sister Mary of St. Francis Petre.

In 1876 the Marquis of Ripon, then Chairman of the Catholic Poor School Committee, paid his first visit to Mount Pleasant. He came again to address the old students at their annual meeting at the close of their retreat in 1877, when the Bishop of Salford, Dr.—afterwards Cardinal—Vaughan presided. Lord Ripon's speech was—to use Sister Mary of St. Philip's own words—"too striking, too full of noble thoughts and wise counsels to be consigned to oblivion." Fortunately for us it was carefully preserved in the College archives. We give one extract from it:—

"Never forget for one moment that, above all things, you are *Catholic* teachers. Great as is the importance of the direct

religious instruction you give in your classes, there is a work you may do for God and the Church by your whole demeanour and your whole conduct—not only within the school but out of it—by the character you establish among your neighbours, and by the light in which you show to them the results of the Catholic faith. I say the work you can do is incomparably more important than even any direct religious instruction you may give. It is my earnest desire that you come forth from this house and home—for I feel sure that you will feel it has been your home—strengthened to do the work which you have to do in the world, for your country, your Church and your God. That work I cannot doubt is often irksome and disheartening to those who look upon it as a secular work, but you, who have higher aspirations and loftier aims, will come forth refreshed by your sojourn here, with renewed zeal, as the happy and responsible members of as great, as noble, and as important a profession as exists in the country.”

Lord Ripon was again present at the annual inspection of the College in the years 1878 and 1879, on each occasion addressing the students in memorable words on the dignity and responsibility of their vocation.

The elevation of Dr. Newman to the Cardinalate in 1879 was an event that gave special joy to Sister Mary of St. Philip, for, though the College never had the honour of a visit from him, yet Sisters and students knew him from his writings, and held him in great reverence and esteem. Mr. Allies drew up an address which was formally presented and read to the Cardinal at Edgbaston by Lord Ripon, in his capacity of chairman of the Catholic Poor School Committee, through whom an autograph answer was afterwards sent to the College.

“TO HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL NEWMAN

“MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EMINENCE,

“The Convent of Notre Dame, Liverpool, which has for 23 years discharged the office of a Training College for Female Teachers, begs to express to you their joy at the immense honour bestowed upon you, an honour reflected in no small degree upon their country, by our Holy Father Leo XIII., in raising you to the dignity of the Cardinalate.

"As an educating institution, we feel the vast importance of a Catholic literature, and we find in the thirty-four volumes of your works, what we trust is an omen of the future richness of our store. You have explored history, with the acutest light of reason illuminated by faith, and philosophy has become, in your hands, the torch-bearer of religion. In these most varied works—a 'well of English undefiled'—you have provided for the ever-increasing millions, who speak the English tongue, and hold the Catholic Faith. Other pupils besides ours will in the ages to come learn by the voice of Gerontius, the secrets of the unseen state, and be drawn to aspire after the prize of eternal communion with God.

"While your Eminence's voice and pen have defended the Church, from that quiet home beneath St. Philip's shadow, which has been yours for so long, our Normal School has been sending out year by year its humble bands of teachers, to labour amongst the least and lowliest of the Eternal Shepherd's flock—the Children of the Poor. For the nine hundred teachers who have already gone forth to this work, we respectfully entreat your Eminence's benediction, and while we lay at your feet this feeble tribute of our veneration and loyal love, we beg that you will number amongst your Eminence's most devoted servants and children in Christ,

"THE SISTERS AND PUPILS OF

"NOTRE DAME, LIVERPOOL.

"*August, 1879.*"

The address was read to the Cardinal at Edgbaston, and an autograph answer was sent through the Marquis of Ripon.

"TO THE MOST NOBLE THE MARQUIS OF
RIPON, K.G., ETC.

"MY LORD,

"The name of the Liverpool Sisters of Notre Dame would have been quite enough, without other words, to make me understand the value of the congratulations which your Lordship has been so good as to put into my hands, in their behalf, and which, I need hardly say, are rendered doubly welcome, as coming to me through your Lordship.

"May I beg of you, the additional favour of your assuring them in turn, of the great pleasure which their address has

given me, not only as proceeding from a religious Community whose kindly estimation of such as me is ever coincident, or even synonymous with prayer for his welfare, but also as expressing the sentiments of ladies, who by their special culture of mind and educational experience have a claim to be heard when they speak, as in his case, on the question whether writings of his have done good service in the cause of the Catholic Faith.

“For the gratification then which their language concerning me has given me, and especially for that over-flowing personal goodwill towards me, which in the first instance has led to their addressing me, I beg of your Lordship’s kindness to return to them my most sincere acknowledgments.

“✠ J. H. CARD. NEWMAN.

“*The Assumption*, 1879.”

Many distinguished persons visited the College in this second decade of its history. Amongst them were Monsignor Nardi, Domestic Prelate to His Holiness, who never failed to visit the College whenever he came to England; Cardinal Cullen, Mr. Aubrey de Vere, Lord Bute, Lord Howard of Glossop, Lord Stafford, the brother of Sister Mary of St. Francis, Monsignor Tylee and many others. Cardinal Manning was often a welcome visitor, and his sympathy with the students and their work found beautiful expression on one occasion when, in reply to their address of welcome, he said :

“MY DEAR CHILDREN,

“You have told me that the swallows fly south, that they bring a message, and that the message is to say ‘how deep and true and tender is the north’—I think I may tell you I have had the message often—and I fully believe it. I have always had the greatest confidence in this Training College of Notre Dame; I have always sent, and shall always send, as many as I can to be trained in it, for I find that those who come out of this home are not only able, intelligent teachers but good and pious and doing their duty. One of the chief offices of us, as priests, is that of *Pastor*, Shepherd of the Flock. You, too, must look upon your school as your little flock, given to you by your Bishop to train up according to the mind of your Blessed Mother; and when you read the tenth chapter

of St. John's Gospel where our Divine Master describes Himself as the Good Shepherd, think of yourselves as little shepherdesses tending the lambs of our Lord. Say to yourselves, 'This is my flock. I know them all, not only their numbers, but their names, their characters, their good qualities, their faults—I know each one of them.'

"And then again, in that beautiful chapter where Isaias describes the qualities of the Shepherd, you will learn the gentleness and charity you should exercise in your work. For in these lies your chief influence over the children, in sweetness and gentle charity. But if the voice of a mistress be raised in harsh words then she loses that influence. I do not mean to say that there must not sometimes be a little show of severe authority and a firm tone, but in general the beauty of your power is in charity and gentleness. I say, then, that, women as you are, I can conceive nothing more important, nothing greater, nothing more blessed, than your future work. I said 'nothing more blessed.' There are some other beautiful words which I always remember; those of the prophet Daniel. 'They that are learned'—he says (learned, that is, not in literature, or science, but learned in piety, in our Holy Faith, in their duty to God and His Church, in the teachings of our Divine Lord and His Blessed Mother)—'they that are learned shall shine with the brightness of the firmament, and they that instruct many unto justice, as stars to all eternity.' That is what you are going to do all your lives. You will 'instruct many,' for those you teach will grow up, and as mothers, teach their own children, and thus your work will extend to a whole country and people. And then the reward: 'They shall shine as stars' with the brightness and glory of the Father 'to all eternity' in their heavenly home.

"I thank you for this address, my dear Children, and I wish you every possible blessing on your work. While you are here in this happy home, profit well by the instructions you receive. *You* are now being 'instructed unto justice,' for you cannot teach till you have learned. Use your time well that hereafter you may know the glory and consolation of your work: consolation here in seeing the progress and formation of those you teach, and in knowing of the love and affection they will bear you all their lives; and consolation, too, one day, for all eternity in heaven."



SANCTUARY, CONVENT OF NOTRE DAME,
MOUNT PLEASANT, LIVERPOOL.

The addition made to the buildings in 1872, which was then considered more than sufficient for the future needs of the College, proved in 1879 quite inadequate for the accommodation of the ever-increasing number of students. For some time the Sisters had been anxious to secure a large plot of land between the Convent and Hope Street, the property of Mr. Robertson Gladstone, a cousin of the then Premier. Fortunately in 1880—just when it was most needed—the owner agreed to sell it. Its purchase gave a spacious recreation ground, tennis lawn, and ambulatory to the students.

On Candlemas Day, 1881, the College completed the twenty-fifth year of its existence. One thousand students had passed from its walls to labour in the fields that were white for the harvest, and she who had formed and trained each one of them, she who had planted the little seed, now a mighty tree, she who had been light and strength to so many souls was happily still there, inspired by the same noble ideals, fired by the same glowing enthusiasm, stirred by the same generous sympathy, as of yore.

It was decided to celebrate the anniversary by a union of many grateful hearts in prayers of thanksgiving for the unbroken chain of blessings which had surrounded the College ever since its humble beginnings in 1856.

On the Feast of Our Lady's Purification the resident students kept a joyous *festa*. There was High Mass and Holy Communion, Solemn Benediction with an appropriate sermon by Canon Teebay later in the day, and a concert in the evening, during which was sung a Jubilee chorus, written by Sister Mary Josephine.

At midsummer, when the vacation set the old students free, over two hundred and fifty representatives of the twelve generations which had gone forth from the College returned to their Alma Mater for two memorable days, to celebrate with joy and thanksgiving the harvest of the fruitful years. And their home-coming—for it was that—was made all the more sweet by the sight of the dear benign face, the incomparable warm welcome, of her whom one and all had learned to love as mother and friend.

"From an early hour on Friday evening," writes an Old Student who was present, "the stream of pilgrims set in, and continued in a steady resistless flow till late on Saturday night.

Ere long every vacant bed was appropriated, yet the cry was 'still they come.' What shifts the Sisters made to accommodate their old flock is known only to themselves, but it was whispered that beds were being made up in many uncomfortable corners, and it was not the Old Students who slept in those questionable resting-places.

"What need to tell of the joyful greetings, the beaming faces, the noise, the laughter, the unceasing talk! Every old pupil of Notre Dame can picture it right well. Friends meeting friends on every side; Sisters who had been ten and even twenty years in religion; mothers of large families, sad-eyed, lonely women fighting a hard battle with the sternest realities of life; light-hearted young girls just tasting its pleasures—all mingling together in the happy home of their youth, the weight of years and sorrows falling from them like a garment. What a time it was! How the old walls rang again with joyful laughter and rapturous greetings! The air seemed charged with happiness pure and unalloyed, and the hours flew by on wings."

The Old Students had long conceived the idea of a commemorative testimonial, and had set their hearts on its taking the form of two stained glass windows for the chapel. But when Sister Mary of St. Philip received some hint of their intention she expressed so strong a wish that the sum should, instead, be sunk in a fund for the assistance of former students in time of sickness or temporary need, that they sacrificed their desire to one so characteristic of her. The collection amounted to 100 guineas, and was presented to her, together with an illuminated address by one of the oldest present. "Never," wrote Sister Mary of St. Philip herself, "was any token of affection less needed as a proof of gratitude, but it was impossible not to be touched by the spirit of loyal enthusiasm with which the offering was made, or the generous unselfishness with which the donors sacrificed their wishes to those of the Sisters."

Nevertheless, the quick insight of Sister Superior Marie Thérésia divined some disappointment at not being able to leave a visible and tangible token to the Alma Mater, and she gave great joy by allowing the schoolmistresses to present the movable oak pulpit just brought in, and to be used for the first time at the morrow's High Mass. From it Father Clare,

S.J., preached in his happiest manner on the text *Exultemus, gaudeamus et demus gloriam Ei*" (Apoc. xix. 7).

A telegram from Rome brought a special Apostolic Benediction to Sisters and scholars, with plenary indulgence for the Jubilee Day. The Catholic Poor School Committee sent, through its devoted Secretary—Mr. Allies—a note of warm congratulation, while a long address to the schoolmistresses themselves came, to Sister Mary of St. Philip's special pleasure, from Mr. Scott Nasmyth Stokes. It took their thoughts back beyond the quarter of a century :

" MY DEAR FRIENDS,

" You will not think me impertinent and obtrusive if, being unable to join you in person, I address to Sister Mary of St. Philip some observations which she will read to you if, and when, she pleases to do so.

" You are assembled upon the happy occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the College we all love so well. All of you know it intimately and many of you have known it long. I claim to have known it longer than the longest, for I knew it before a governess had been appointed or a student admitted. Allow me then the privilege of reminiscences. Thirty years ago I was the first Secretary of the newly formed Poor School Committee. In those early days Government Grants reached schools in the shape of payments to teachers and pupil teachers. A few Catholic teachers offered themselves for examination, and gradually the schools applied one after another for pupil teachers. I remember feeling greatly pleased when the Sisters of Mercy asked to have pupil teachers appointed for their new school in Blandford Square. The difficulty was to find proper candidates. A girl of suitable age and character was obtained, but her preparation found to be quite inadequate: what happened? At that time it was my happiness to know a lady living in the world, of whom I am quite unable to speak as she deserves. Young, vivacious and accomplished, she lived in a wealthy home amidst comfort and luxury, surrounded by relatives who loved and friends who admired her. Yet even then her chief care was given to religion and charity. Perhaps you guess who this lady was. At any rate I applied to this clever and charitable person to prepare C. H. for the Candidates' examination. She did so successfully. That was long ago."

Then after narrating the beginnings of the Training College and affectionately praising its work, the letter concluded :

“ Censure and opposition, ignorance and ill-nature were disregarded ; disappointment only produced more vigorous effort. Wisdom to plan, generosity to find means, courage to persevere—these are the qualities which, with the blessing of heaven, have created the Liverpool Training College, and which, initiated by you, will make your schools too, like it, the best of their class.

“ With sincere affection and hearty wishes for you all and each,

“ I am, while I live, the admiring friend of the Liverpool

“ College and its Students,

“ S. N. STOKES.”

The happy hours of these two short days of reunion left an ineffaceable memory on all who were privileged to join in them, whether as Sisters or students. Sister Mary of St. Philip herself had indeed great cause for consolation, for it was through her instrumentality, and that of her devoted and loyal colleagues, that God's Providence had wrought such marvellous changes in the condition of Catholic Elementary Education in England. With her transparent candour she recognised this, and with her grand humility she realised the spirit of Our Lady's *Magnificat*. As she had laboured always with but one end in view—the greater honour and glory of God—so now when the years yielded their rich harvest, there ran through all her songs of thanksgiving the one theme : “ *Non nobis, Domine, sed Nomini Tuo da gloriam.*”

[On the Feast of the Assumption, 1865, Sister Mary of St. Philip's father died after a very short illness. He had given his children to God with the generosity that is born of faith and piety, and God, Who is never outdone in generosity, gave him the crowning blessing of a happy and holy death.]

CHAPTER XIV

THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH

"Uphold me with the strength that cannot tire,
Nerve me to labour till Thou bid me rest,
Kindle my fire from Thine unkindled fire
And charm the willing heart from out my breast."
C. ROSSETTI.

WHEN joy and success came to Our Lady's Training College the cross was never long absent. "We must expect it," Sister Mary of St. Philip would say; "it is to remind us not to be too pleased with ourselves and the things of this world, for we have not here a lasting city. Perfect happiness belongs to Heaven."

In this very year of Jubilee there came a great loss to the College and a great personal sorrow to Sister Mary of St. Philip in the death of Sister Mary Columba Hartigan, who had been second mistress in the College since 1859, and was much beloved by her colleagues and pupils. Though she suffered for years from chronic asthma, she was always patient, sweet and affable. A natural charm of manner and language and no small measure of Irish wit combined to make her lessons most attractive, whilst her cultured mind, her sound judgment and the solid character of her attainments ensured their thoroughness. The students always remarked her quick perception and keen appreciation of all that was good and beautiful in the subject of her lesson, nor were they less observant of her heroic courage when she persevered in her teaching in spite of much physical suffering. For the last two years of her life she was confined to her room, scarcely ever leaving it except to go to the chapel. Her last visitors were some old students, who were allowed to see her for a few minutes in the Community room, at the time of the Jubilee celebrations. But she employed her days in the practice of closer union with God—not only by prayer, but also by the exercise of that active charity by which a soul is drawn the nearer to Him as it draws near to other souls. Up to the last few weeks of her life, she was busy with her pen, correcting

papers, setting questions, helping the teaching Sisters with her advice and experience, carrying on an extensive correspondence with many who needed counsel and guidance, and working with an eager, loving interest at all that her hand found to do. But at length asthma brought on an affection of the heart, and on October 26, Sister Mary Columba passed to the reward of her pious and devoted life, mourned by all who knew her, and remembered by all as a holy religious, and an accomplished teacher.

In the same year death claimed Gertrude Shaw, one of the most gifted of the Second Year Students. On several occasions she had spoken to her companions of death, and had copied into a little note-book Father Faber's well-known lines :

“ Long life dismays me by the sense
Of my own weakness scared ;
And by Thy grace a sudden death
Need not be unprepared.”

One evening she complained of a bad headache—meningitis declared itself—and from that moment till two nights later, when she passed in silence, Sister Mary of St. Philip never left her bedside. She was a very pious girl with a gentle but strong influence over her fellow-students.

The year 1882 was a busy one for Sister Mary of St. Philip and her Staff. Needlework was taken up as a hobby, and Miss Jones came to Liverpool for a course of conferences and instructions on what was now regarded as a science as well as an art. Cookery, in its turn, claimed and received special attention. Then there were Shakespearian Readings by Monsignor Kershaw, lectures on Astronomy by Father Perry, S.J., of Stonyhurst, and on Education by Canon Motler. Every Thursday morning, too, there were lessons on Experimental Chemistry by Father Richard Vaughan in the laboratory at St. Francis Xavier's College.

Years before, Sister Mary of St. Philip had sent some of her former students to follow a course in Botany at South Kensington, in which they had attained honourable distinction. In more recent years others had been admitted to holiday courses on Biology, Acoustics, and Light and Heat. Always she and her Sisters contrived to lead the way, when her students had to follow what were then less beaten tracks of knowledge;

always they had to make many personal sacrifices to undertake this pioneer work, and always God rewarded them with signal success. Yet at this juncture when the standard of requirements in Training Colleges was being considerably raised, even Sister Mary of St. Philip's power of resource seemed taxed to the uttermost.

Professional generosity has always been a characteristic of the Liverpool Training College. Sister Mary of St. Philip's large mind and heart could not refuse any help to those who knocked at her door. Nor was her liberality confined to Catholic teachers; heads of non-Catholic Colleges and other educational institutions could all draw freely on her accumulated store of wisdom and experience. And all alike were charmed by her courtesy and her humility not less than by her wonderful powers of organisation and initiative.

It was characteristic, too, of Sister Mary of St. Philip that her attitude towards these inquiring and admiring guests was invariably that of a grateful disciple indebted to them for valuable hints. This attitude was, needless to say, absolutely sincere, for she was of those who seem to receive a favour when they confer one on others. Amongst many non-Catholic friends of this period were Miss Bishop, Principal of St. Gabriel's College, London; Miss Buss, Principal of the North London Collegiate School; Miss Trevor, of the Chichester Training College; and Miss Ravenscroft, for long associated with the Home and Colonial Training College. It was Miss Ravenscroft who came to Liverpool in 1882 and introduced Sister Mary of St. Philip to the L.L.A. scheme, which Professor Knight of St. Andrews had planned and instituted. Since many of the other universities have opened their gates to women students, the L.L.A. Diploma has depreciated in academic value, but at the time of which we write it was, perhaps, the best to be had, and at all events the correspondence tuition was excellent and thorough. Professor Knight's name, indeed, was sufficient guarantee of scholarship and culture.

Sister Mary of St. Philip had several young and talented Sisters on her staff, whom she at once set to work at the correspondence classes, arranging that they should select the subjects of which the standard had just been raised in the Training Colleges. Further, three or four years later, she invited Professor Knight to Liverpool in order that he might lecture to the Sisters

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and students on his favourite topic—the Higher Education of Women. On his return to St. Andrews he wrote to her:

“Will you allow me to say how very greatly interested I was in my brief visit to Mount Pleasant, and how very much I admire and rejoice in the work you are doing there? Few things remain so vividly and brightly in my memory as your educational work. I see, as I write, the radiant faces of those children whom you must have taught to love ‘the true and the beautiful and the good,’ as well as to receive instruction. Your girls in training, too, seemed to be, one and all, rejoicing in the work, and in the formation you are giving them.

“In addition let me thank you for the personal influence received from my visit to Mount Pleasant. In this weary and distracted time, and amid the multiplicity of conflicting interests and ideals, it was a joy and rest to me to see such good work being done towards those who will in time be the teachers of the coming generation.”

In the autumn of 1883, the Sisters at Liverpool had an amusing battle with the Corporation Authorities over the paving of Mount Pleasant. Tramway lines were to be laid down, and the Sisters were strongly advised to insist on a comparatively noiseless pavement. There was much discussion on the point by the City Fathers, and eventually Sister Superior, ably seconded by influential friends, won the victory. It chanced one day that, as she and Sister Mary of St. Philip were scanning the daily paper for the report of the proceedings of the City Council, their eyes were arrested by an advertisement of a property for sale, designated by a name of happy omen: “The Cloisters, in St. Michael’s Hamlet.” It was a dwelling-house with pleasure grounds, kitchen-garden and paddock, and gardener’s cottage, situated very near the Dingle, and affording a fine view of the Mersey and the Cheshire coast. Three months before, when Sister Mary of St. Francis was on a visit to Liverpool, she had urged upon Sister Mary of St. Philip to find a place within walking distance from the College, which could be used as a country resort for the students. Sister Mary of St. Philip at once communicated with her superiors at Namur, and, after not a little diplomacy on the part of the legal agent employed by the Institute, the property was secured. In January 1884, the students visited The Cloisters for the first time, and even in midwinter its quiet loveliness enchanted them. Sister Mary



THE CLOISTERS.
ST. MICHAEL'S HAMLET, LIVERPOOL.

of St. Philip wrote : " Shut in from the outer world by beech and sycamore trees and a girdle of evergreens, the spot looked as calm and secluded as Tennyson's island valley of Avilion."

When old students recall The Cloisters, one day in the year will stand out in sharper, clearer outline than any other. In May came the Feast of St. Philip. Then, indeed, his namesake showed in her children's midst as queen and mother, when they gathered round her on the greensward at The Cloisters, to read her an address in prose or verse, to sing their ringing chorus helped by the blackbirds and thrushes, and then, perchance, to play before her, amid the rhododendrons and may-blossom, some graceful masque or pastoral fantasy—scenes from *As You Like It*, or their charming dramatic arrangement of *The Princess*.

After tea in the meadow came the famous Dumb Charades, in which Sister Mary of St. Philip took her spirited part; and then, as the shadows of the great beeches lengthened across the lawn, she gathered them round the image of Our Lady beneath the verandah to say the Rosary, and sing St. Philip's hymn by way of farewell. She valued the simple *fête* for the expression of her children's love, she valued its beautiful setting as she valued all that was fair and seemly, but yet more because of the picture it sealed upon *la mémoire du cœur* of her girls, she valued all these things as means of lifting and dilating and binding their hearts together in the apostolate of Christ.

" Put them in the Heart of Jesus,
Dearest Saint, and leave them there " —

so did she ever with the hearts that loved her.

All through the exceptionally beautiful summer of 1884 The Cloisters was a never-failing source of delight and of healthful recreation. Tennis was played on the lawn, and games of all kinds in the meadow. Science and sewing classes were held there, and in June the Inspectors sat under the trees hearing the reading and recitation of the students.

Many years later an adjacent property bearing the equally felicitous name of The Friary was purchased by the Sisters, and is now used as a hostel for University students.

It was during the Lent of 1884 that the " First Friday Meetings " at the College were inaugurated. They were intended for teachers in or near Liverpool who had been trained

at Mount Pleasant, or were employed in schools under the charge of the Sisters of Notre Dame. They assembled in the students' recreation room at half-past six, when announcements were given out, pious practices and devotions suggested, and prayers asked for various intentions. At seven came Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, after which Sister Mary of St. Philip and her Staff were at the disposition of any who needed help or advice. It was on such occasions as these that Sister Mary of St. Philip seemed to multiply herself in order to comfort and strengthen her children. She had a royal memory for faces, and, better still, for hearts and souls; many sought her and besought her, and never in vain, but there were others who were timid and shy, or perhaps fearful of making undue or unnecessary demands upon her time. These her ready sympathy would mark out for encouraging invitation or personal inquiry. And always there was a note of sincerity in her relations with each and all, which precluded any idea of mere conventionalism, or professionalism, in the interest she showed. She sympathised in all things: with joys, with sorrows, with plans, with hopes, with fears, and the whole of her person sympathised—eyes, attitude, tone of voice.

"If she could only," wrote one of her children, "have given us a tenth part of her sympathy, and a hundredth part of her sense of humour! I think it is these two qualities in her which keep her so young as to be everybody's contemporary—these, and the fact that she is, as she says, 'always learning.'"

This sympathy showed itself in many delicate forms, both in act and expression. One who had been a student in 1856 wrote in 1893:

"She once accompanied us on an excursion to New Brighton. As we were on the sands the Welsh steamer *Satellite*, plying between Mostyn and Liverpool, by which I used to travel, passed by. I pointed it out to her, and she immediately made a pencil sketch of it for me, knowing it would give me pleasure. I have it still among my treasures." (She had kept it for thirty-seven years!)

In 1885, Sister Mary of St. Philip wrote and published her little *History of the Training College*, to which we have had frequent recourse during the writing of this memoir. In 1881, at the Jubilee reunion, the students had asked her for another *Voice*, and the little book was her answer.

"The story of the early life of a school like ours," she says,

"is naturally a record of some anxieties, of much happy toil, and also by God's blessing, of a certain amount of success, secured less by talents or good fortune, than by that 'infinite capacity for taking trouble,' which Carlyle calls genius but which we prefer to call a grace attached to our vocation as Sisters of Notre Dame." The book ends with a characteristic appeal: "Our little history is indeed intended as a perennial *Voice* speaking to all who care to listen, amongst those who have gone forth from the camp on the Pleasant Mountain, to work for God and for His Church, rallying them round their ancient standard, and reminding them 'not to degenerate from the high thoughts of the children of God.' . . . Above all, may it call back to their allegiance those (if there be any such), whose talents, after being dedicated to the service of the Church, are now perhaps helping a hostile cause, and whose loyalty has not, alas! been proof against the temptation of temporal gain.

"Apostles of Jesus, His heart is in anguish
For souls which He seems to have bled for, in vain:
Each moment is precious and Hope seems to languish
While the cause of that Heart is forgotten of men.
Apostles of Jesus!
Go forth to the battle and triumph again."

But there is an aspect that we have perhaps left too much in shadow in the picture of Sister Mary of St. Philip's busy life. For beside and beneath the public and official life, she led with equal strenuousness the hidden life of community, which makes that other fruitful and sweet. "If our Sisters," said Blessed Mère Julie, "do not cultivate the interior spirit which keeps them united to Our Lord in the midst of their outward occupations, they will never do anything of much worth."

All Sister Mary of St. Philip's work was "of much worth," and just for the reason that it was animated by "the interior spirit" recommended by our Blessed Mother. All her busy life was supernaturalised because all she did was so entirely for God. But in the mixed life of Our Lady's Sisters there is a second element—fidelity to the possible quota of common manual service. There are no Lay Sisters in the Institute of Notre Dame, and, as by our vow of poverty we are all poor folk, we are not waited upon by servants. The work of the Institute is allotted to its members by Superiors who know the capacity and capabilities of each, and naturally those who teach do less than

others in the way of household work. There is always, however, something to be done in the scullery after meals, and there is often an opportunity, even for the most intellectually busy, to lend a helping hand at ironing, sweeping, dusting, and other domestic duties. Such things are done in common in a kindly family manner, all who are free lending willing assistance without any thought of obligation. Blessed Julie required all her Sisters to do some manual work, and those who walk most closely in her footsteps are usually conspicuous for their devotedness to the common "charges." During the scholastic year Sister Mary of St. Philip had little chance of joining in such work, but in the holidays she entered into it with as much zest as if it were her favourite occupation. Night after night she was to be found in the scullery, scouring pots and pans with as much enthusiasm and zeal as she displayed when collecting her precious botanical specimens. All she ever did was a labour of love, and her vigour, as well as the ingenuity and decision with which she appropriated the worst part of the work, were the despair of her collaborators. "Why don't you go to recreation, my dears?" she said one evening to a group of young Sisters who, having washed plates and dishes, stood, according to compact, in determined line before her. "Because we intend to scour pots, and we will not go till we have each done one." And Sister Mary of St. Philip laughingly handed them over to the junior members of her Staff, which, again, was the kindest thing to do. The saint who refuses all offers of help is a very trying saint for young people to live with in community.

Her talents and experience were ever at the service of the Sisters. In the early days, when few had been through a regular course of training, some already teaching in the schools had to prepare themselves as best they could to pass the Certificate Examination as "Acting Teachers." Whenever Sister Mary of St. Philip could snatch half an hour from the crowded day, she was eager to give them lessons, to correct their exercises, to answer their questions, to settle their difficulties. On Saturdays she had always a free quarter of an hour before the midday *examen*; she would go to the study, draw up a plan of work for the coming week, indicate books and pages, and with a kind word of encouragement hasten to the chapel.

She gave help right and left without a thought of self—to Sisters, students, managers of schools, lecturers in other

Training Colleges. She found time for all—partly because of the wonderfully rapid working of her mind, partly because of her long and varied experience, but, beyond and above all, because the mainspring of all her actions was her boundless love for God and for His children. *Caritas Christi urget nos.*

Though in the Training College she took her position with simple dignity, in Community she was generally to be found in the background. Her old friend, Father de Buggenoms, once came to address the assembled Sisters, "But where is Sister Mary of St. Philip?" he asked when he had finished. "*Voilà! celle qui se cache,*" said the Superior, and Sister Mary of St. Philip was called up from the bottom of the room. It was not that she ostentatiously chose the lowest place—her grand nature made her incapable of affectation—but she simply sat down on the nearest vacant chair.

"Mother-Queen" had she ever been to her students, and that, too, in God's good time, was she to be to her Sisters in religion, but that hour had not yet struck. She was still Sister Mary of St. Philip—the simple Sister of Notre Dame as conceived by Blessed Julie Billiart, as developed by her spirit and her Rule, simple, poor, humble, obedient—Mary in prayer, howsoever busy like Martha.

Her culture, wide reading and experience of the world were a priceless educational asset upon which she drew freely when teaching her students. But the Sisters who came less in contact with her knew little of the precious intellectual stores that were hers. Even among the members of the College Staff few really knew the full extent of her accomplishments and her gifts. Thus it was only through a chance remark made by Sir Joshua Fitch, in 1888, that they discovered from Sister Mary of St. Philip's reply, her intimate knowledge of Italian language and literature. It was only when to please or help others she would in perfect simplicity put her accomplishments under contribution that they learnt of her skill in music, in painting, and in embroidery. Otherwise, she preferred to appear as a learner where she could so easily have been teacher.

She dearly loved the "Lady Poverty" and her twin sister Humility. Not only did she sedulously avoid the superfluous, but also the new and the more convenient. In vain did the student who dusted her room lay fresh pens and pencils on her writing-table—Sister Mary of St. Philip invariably got

rid of them, and was never seen to use any but worn-down stumps and old pen-nibs. Year after year the same memorandum diary and note-book of criticisms served her, and she would be seen, at the end of term-time, clearing it for another twelvemonth's service by a vigorous application of india-rubber. We have been through numberless notes of hers—of lectures, lessons, conferences, counsels to her Staff; not one but is written on old, half-used sheets of paper or the backs of old envelopes.

For thirty years Sister Mary of St. Philip had borne the burden and the heat of the day, as Vice-Principal of the Training College and as a simple religious living under obedience, when, in 1886, came one of those wrenches in her life which God had before made use of to purify and strengthen the soul of His servant. The health of Sister Mary of St. Francis (Petre), Superior of the Mother-House at Namur was causing great anxiety to all who knew her. Early in this year the disease from which she had suffered for some time was aggravated by a severe chill, and though she bravely strove to hide her suffering, and to let it interfere as little as possible with the regularity of her life of work and prayer, it became evident to Mère Aloysie that the end was not far off. In May she seemed very weak and ill and, while the doctors still held out hope of her recovery, she herself did not share it. On Whit-Sunday she said quite serenely to the Chaplain: "Every one tells me I shall recover, but I myself do not think so." On Whit-Tuesday she received the Last Sacraments.

As soon as the alarming news reached Liverpool, Sister Superior Marie Thérésia, and Sister Mary of St. Philip set out for Namur. The annual examination of the College was in progress, and Mr. (afterwards Sir) Joshua Fitch had scarcely seen either the Sister Superior or the Vice-Principal, but there were competent Sisters to carry on the work in their absence; and in any case nothing could have kept them back from their errand of charity. Sister Mary of St. Francis lingered till June 24, when she gave up her great soul to God. It was Corpus Christi, a fitting day for her, whose favourite devotion had been to furnish and adorn so many earthly homes of Emmanuel, to enter into the place where His glory dwelleth. Sister Marie Thérésia and Sister Mary of St. Philip saw much of the invalid during her last days on earth; and in a detailed account of her holy death which Sister Mary of St. Philip wrote to

Liverpool, she said : " One great soul less on earth—one more in heaven." ¹

It will be remembered that, with the consent of her Superiors, Sister Mary of St. Francis's fortune was designed, from the very beginning of her religious life, for the education of the children of the poor, and that when the time was ripe for the opening of the Liverpool Training College substantial financial help was forthcoming. Mount Pleasant then, in one sense, owed its existence to her. But there were other and stronger ties which united her with the Sisters. All her religious life of thirty-six years had been spent by Sister Mary of St. Francis at the Mother-House. She had been appointed successively Mistress of Postulants, Mistress of Novices, and Superior. Hence she had been responsible for the early training of several generations of Sisters, and all who knew her loved her. Again, all business transactions connected with the English houses of the Institute passed through her hands; many of the new foundations owed their existence to her.

Her love for her native land made it a special joy to her to know that in devoting herself, and all that was hers, to the service of God, she was also promoting the best interests of her country.

She paid constant visits to England either as companion to Reverend Mother-General, or as her representative. Her last visit was in 1883, but she was then so ill that she was unable to fulfil her engagements with several of the convents. The last three years of her life were full of suffering, heroically borne. She never lost touch with the English houses, keeping up the correspondence with them till her weak fingers could no longer guide her pen, and even then she dictated letters to them.

When Sister Marie Thérésia and Sister Mary of St. Philip went to Namur in June, 1886, the Sisters at Mount Pleasant followed them in spirit to the deathbed of her who had been a mother to so many, and to whom all had much cause for gratitude. But the examination went on quietly and the usual Conference was held with the members of the Catholic Poor School Committee. Mr. Allies expressed his regret that Mr. Fitch had had but a transient glimpse of the " motherliness " of Sister Superior and the " informing influence " of Sister Mary of St. Philip. In his address to the students he paid a touching tribute to the work accomplished for education in England,

¹ See *Life of Sister Mary of St. Francis, S.N.D.*, Washbourne & Co.

through the instrumentality of Sister Mary of St. Francis; "You are living here," he concluded, "when she is dying. You are taught by those who call themselves her Sisters. What is the lesson you are to learn from her life? What is it that made her so devote herself? It was Charity—the triple Charity of Bethlehem, of Nazareth, and of Calvary."

Meantime, the absence of Sister Superior and Sister Mary of St. Philip raised a cloud of apprehension in the hearts of many at Mount Pleasant, for it was realised that the death of Sister Mary of St. Francis would necessitate changes which could not but affect the Liverpool Convent. Yet the two inevitably concerned seemed to have given no thought to the possibility of the events which so many others foresaw. There is at any rate no suspicion of "the old order" changing in the following letter written from Namur by Sister Mary of St. Philip to her students:

"June 26, 1886.

"MY DEAR CHILDREN,

"If I were at home to-day I should be having a little talk with you about the holidays, and though I know that dear Sister Thérèse will tell you all that is needful, I cannot refrain from sending you just a few words before you go.

"It has been a comfort to dear Sister Superior and to me in our sorrow to hear how you have helped the Sisters and lightened their work all through last week's labours, and how you are one with us in praying for her whom we are mourning, and whose loss—not only to us, but to you, and to your future children, and to the Church in England—is greater than words can say. The only thought that sustains us is that her prayers in heaven will continue what she has begun upon earth. One thing you may be sure of—she will always pray for the Training College and those connected with it, and you must try to become more worthy of the earthly friend who has now become a heavenly one.

"You will begin, will you not, by spending happy and useful holidays? 'Real recreation is a change of occupation,' so you will not waste your time, but try to be useful and helpful in your homes—sewing, cooking, making everything bright and cheerful. And you will not sit down to read tales always for your own pleasure only, but you will sometimes read aloud to amuse others.

Let unselfishness and self-forgetfulness be your two great virtues. And you will not want any pleasures but those you share with your dear home ones—going to Church together, and taking country walks together.

“You will have your little plan for the holidays, and do try to follow it faithfully, especially as to daily Mass when near a Church, Holy Communion as often as in College, Rosary always, and a chapter from *The Following of Christ* or some other spiritual book.

“My last word is that dear Sister Superior says all must be back on the date fixed as you will have but one day to prepare for your retreat. She sends you her love and promises to pray for you every day at Mass.

“Always yours very affectionately in the Sacred Heart,
“SISTER MARY OF ST. PHILIP, S.N.D.”

She returned to Mount Pleasant after the funeral of Sister Mary of St. Francis, but she returned alone, for Sister Marie Thérésia was named Superior of the Mother-House at Namur, while Sister Mary of St. Philip was to succeed her at Mount Pleasant. It was a double blow to Sister Mary of St. Philip, and she found it hard to resign herself to the new order. The separation from her beloved Superior was an intense sorrow, but she was also faced by at least partial separation from the Training College. For long years she had devoted herself entirely to the training of her students; she had governed, organised, and taught, entered into, and participated in, the smallest details of College affairs. As Superior she would have her interest and her energy directed into many other channels, and, whilst nominally Principal of the College, she would have to place in other hands much of the work which had been both labour and delight to her in the past. The renunciation which she was called upon to make was not rendered more easy by the heavy burden of responsibility which she was called upon to accept. Small wonder then if human nature pleaded to be spared the weight of that burden. She returned to Mount Pleasant, but, though virtually Superior, her appointment was not officially announced, for she still hoped—though she was alone in her hope—that the decision of her Superior-General might be revoked.

On July 24, a solemn Requiem Mass was offered in the chapel at Mount Pleasant for the repose of the soul of Sister Mary of St. Francis. The annual Retreat of the Community was just ending, so that many Sisters from other convents of Notre Dame were able to be present at the *Month's Mind*. Many priests attended as a tribute of respect to her whose life of unostentatious sacrifice—comparatively little known because passed in a foreign land—was the source of many and widespread blessings to the children of the poor in her own England.

Canon Carr addressed the Community after the Requiem Mass. He knew the grief which filled their hearts, and, as an old and intimate friend, he knew how to sympathise. After expressing his sorrow at the death of Sister Mary of St. Francis, he continued: "I feel that I must allude to another loss. We miss the presence amongst us of one who has been to this house for many years an excellent and beloved Superior. I feel that in expressing my sympathy for you, I am also expressing what my Lord Bishop feels, what the clergy feel. For I am confident that there is not a priest in the city who knew her, who had witnessed the gentle yet firm control with which she governed this house, the kindly and motherly relations which bound her to the Sisters—there is not, I say, one who does not entertain for your late admirable Superior, Sister Marie Thérésia, feelings of the sincerest esteem and regard."

We have already spoken of the affection which united Sister Marie Thérésia and Sister Mary of St. Philip, an affection which was the measure of their mutual grief at parting. Yet as their affection had always been a strong and virile thing, so also was their grief. Their united aim was to promote God's glory on earth, and if His glory could be furthered by personal sacrifice they would not refuse it. Sister Marie Thérésia knew how eminently fitted Sister Mary of St. Philip was to succeed her, but both she and Mère Aloysie wisely forbore to press the matter immediately. At Christmas, however, she was called to Namur. Time had helped her to resign herself, though the struggle had been sharp, and she bowed her shoulders to the yoke of obedience.

She was back at Liverpool on January 18, and to the great joy of the Community was formally installed as Superior two days later. She already possessed the esteem and confidence of every Sister at Mount Pleasant. Some had lived and worked

with her for many years—witnesses of her piety, her zeal, her regular observance. Many had been trained by her in the College, and brought by the silent influence of her holy example to aspire to the religious life. All had seen the humility, the exactitude, the fidelity, and the cheerfulness of her obedience to authority. And, without any loss of individuality, she had so identified herself with Sister Marie Thérésia that all realised there would be no deviation from the spirit of the rule which had governed Mount Pleasant so gently and so firmly for many happy and fruitful years.

Outside the Community, too, there was general satisfaction. Those who knew the great work which she had carried on with rare devotedness and selflessness rejoiced to see how that work was recognised and appreciated by her Superior General, and they hoped that in her new position she would be able to exert even greater influence in the educational world than she had done in the past.

CHAPTER XV

“ CARITAS CHRISTI URGET NOS ”

“ Through death, love, pain, I need
Only Thy hand to lead,
And the one true way for me,
Master, is trusting Thee.”

EMILY HICKEY.

WHEN Sister Mary of St. Philip was appointed Superior she was in her sixty-second year. For thirty years she had been the life and soul of the Training College, and now she might naturally have hoped for some lessening of her labour and care. But an entry in one of her note-books at this time gives us an idea of the task that lay before her. She had under her care—

1. A Training College for 110 Students.
2. A House of Residence for seventy Pupil Teachers employed in Liverpool Roman Catholic Schools.
3. A Middle School in two departments for 270 Girls and Infants.
4. A High School for Girls attended by 280 pupils.
5. Eight Public Elementary Schools, each with two departments, taught by certificated Sisters residing at Mount Pleasant.
6. A Community of sixty members, the majority being occupied in teaching.

N.B.—The number of students trained in the College between 1856 and 1887 is 1880.

The number of pupils in schools taught by the Sisters of Mount Pleasant is 6000.

With characteristic energy and thoroughness the new Superior set about her work. As Sister Mary of St. Philip she had always taken a sympathetic interest in every department of the great institution, whilst tactfully refraining from any intrusion on the work or domain of others. Now, however,

she was brought into intimate personal relations with all, and all were to feel the magnetic influence of her personality and the benefit of her long years of experience.

She reorganised the studies in the High School and arranged the curriculum on the lines of the Oxford Local Examinations. The Pupil Teachers Centre also was made to pulsate with vigorous life, for she watched the signs of the times, and realised that at no far distant date the standard of education for teachers in Elementary Schools would be considerably raised, and her labour of long years had taught her how impossible of attainment this would be, unless candidates for admission to the Training College had already laid the foundations of a more liberal education.

Though Sister Thérèse of the Passion was appointed Vice-Principal of the College, Sister Superior—as she was henceforth called—as Principal, still remained in close touch with the staff and students. She continued to lecture in Education and History, and, as far as her new duties would permit, she took an active part in the daily life of the students. Yet we must remark that, now as always, she gave full freedom of management and initiative to those under her. Her natural gift of discerning latent possibilities in others, her generous recognition of them, and her willingness to delegate her power to her subordinates, were among her most valuable assets in her practical work as a Superior. Hitherto her relations with the College Staff had been, in one sense, more or less academic, now she was responsible not merely for their work, but for the inner spirit which animated them.

A new note of motherly care and consideration for their spiritual needs now occurs in her conferences with them. She had often given them useful advice, urging them “to pursue things to the bitter end,” and impressing on them that “true government consists not in telling people what to do, but in seeing that they do it,” and in all this she probably considered the training only of her students. Now it was her business and her duty to think also of the training of her spiritual daughters, and she sought to lift every detail of their arduous work into the supernatural plane :

“I hope you are going to begin the year with really supernatural motives and in great joy. The work is hard, I do not

deny, and you would not do it except for God. But sometimes you may be tempted to look at the difficult side, and to forget how much God's glory is concerned. We have always understood that no branch of work in our Institute is doing as much for the Church and the poor as the Training College, and it is by the success of the College, secured at the cost of much labour and prayer, that the complete secularisation of our schools has been so long warded off. Do not let us overlook the consoling side of our work, but often consider it. It is not natural consolation, but the certainty that we are drawing nearer to God and drawing others with us. You may be tempted also to think your work a distraction—a hindrance in your spiritual life. It may be, if our minds are wholly absorbed in it; but it need not be, if we remember that it is all for God and the Church. Here is both our consolation and our safeguard."

At another time she reminds them :

"We must work in great union and charity. Of course where there are so many different characters together there will sometimes be a little friction; but here I come back to the saying of Mère Chappuis : *Laissez tomber, laissez passer*. Even with pupils do not notice every slight fault; let things drop. . . .

"It is part of humility to give and take sympathy. I was reading somewhere—in Cardinal Newman, I think—that Our Lord not only gave, but condescended so often to come for sympathy from others. We all of us require a great deal of sympathy; it makes our work so much lighter and easier. We have a right to expect sympathy from others, but we must also be determined to give it."

No one more than Sister Superior rejoiced to see in her Sisters a taste for study, a deep and wide preparation for their lectures or lessons. But as the necessity for these things became more imperative, she realised that they might, if unduly pursued, weaken the religious spirit by encouraging an individualism which would check that devotedness to the general good which had always been a dominant characteristic of the College.

“ I want to speak to you of something—hardly, I think, as yet an abuse, but which might easily become one—I mean desire of study, and zeal for improving oneself. I know things are very different now to what they were in the beginnings of the College and the curriculum is harder. Yet there has really always been the same difficulty to face. Every year some fresh subject was put on, and we had to learn it. In the early days there was very little time for preparing lessons, but Almighty God blessed the work of the Sisters and we got through. As for myself, I have had constant interruptions in what I was doing, all my life; I had to go to the parlour, especially to all the School Managers, to look after the sick, to take visitors and inspectors round the house—not by any particular wish or choice on my part, but simply because there was no one else to do the things.

“ We must always take care not to study for ourselves, not for the pleasure we find in it, nor for the sake of gaining knowledge for our own possession, but for God’s sake, and that of those we teach. And so we must be ready to leave our studies at the call of duty or charity. Before we sit down to our private work let us look round, and see if there is anything to be done for the common good—a room to be got ready for a meeting, for instance. There are so many things of this sort calling for our devotedness in the Training College, they are practices of humility and of mortification, and will bring down a blessing on our work.”

It was in these weekly meetings with her Staff that her scrupulous carefulness of the pupils’ characters appeared. One young Sister who had thoughtlessly made a remark in Community on the dullness of a member of her class was ever after grateful for Sister Superior’s severe reprimand and grave explanation that, in the case of students, such remarks touched professional reputation, and were to be as conscientiously avoided as in the case of doctors or lawyers.

One of the most charming traits in Sister Superior’s character was her ready appreciation of the efforts of the youngest members of the College Staff, some of whom had been but quite recently her pupils. One Sister recalls how when she arrived at the Training College immediately after her religious profession, Sister Superior said to her : “ Well, my dear, you

are young and enthusiastic, and I hope you have come back to us with all kinds of fresh ideas for teaching. Experiment as much as you like, and work out as many novel methods and devices as your brain can conceive." That touch of romance in her which lent so much colour and life to her girlhood was always with her, brightening and vivifying her work whether intellectual or spiritual; for, after all, what is romance but the quest of ideal beauty and truth, and her life had been long consecrated to the sacred quest of Eternal Beauty and Truth. This was in no small measure the reason why she found so much to admire in persons, places and things. We usually find that for which we look; she looked for beauty, even in the most unlikely places, and she rarely failed to find it in some form or other. Her attitude in this respect may be best summed up in those simple lines of R. L. Stevenson :

"The world is so full of a number of things,
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings."

Sometimes she would describe places or incidents she had seen, and those who had shared the experience with her would listen in surprise, wondering at their own blindness in having missed so much which she had noted. This natural gift of appreciation may have been partly due to her power of quickly seizing details, but its roots lay deep in the soil of that humility which nourishes every plant that grows in the garden of Christian perfection.

Almost immediately after her appointment as Superior, she began to devise some means for alleviating the lot of poor working girls, many of whom had been educated in the various elementary schools in Liverpool conducted by the Sisters of Notre Dame. Realising the discomfort and inconveniences which these girls had to undergo in factories and workshops during the day, and the cheerless homes to which they returned at night, she sought the co-operation of the Reverend Managers of several schools, who gladly gave their permission for the class-rooms to be used every evening for recreative purposes. We have referred to occasional concerts and entertainments given by the students for these girls, but the scheme now inaugurated arranged for regular meetings presided over by Sisters, many of whom had already spent a long day in the schoolroom. But these recreative evenings for poor girls,

however arduous to the Sisters, were none the less welcomed by them as means to save souls. Sister Superior's early love for the poor had grown ever stronger with the years, and now her new position gave her even more freedom to express it. At Christmastide when the pupils of the High School offered her their good wishes, they supplemented them by a generous gift of clothing, made by their own hands, for the poor. This custom, copied from the Mother-House, still prevails. She was always insistent that charity towards the poor was, or should be, synonymous with love of the poor; that alms should not be given from one's superfluities, but from one's necessities, and that the more of personal service one could put into the alms, the truer and more Christlike the charity.

Sister Superior's work in the Training College had always kept her in touch with the Elementary Schools, and her interest now did not diminish. She continued the practice—begun some years before by Sister Marie Thérésia—of holding examinations at stated intervals. A set of questions in the various subjects taught was drawn up by a Sister of great experience, and these were sent to each school. Certain subjects such as reading, recitation and music required personal examination, and this was carried out by Sister Superior herself, aided by some of the College Staff. When the papers and exercises were corrected, a comparison was made of the results of the different schools. By this means a uniform standard of attainment was set which all were stimulated and encouraged to attain.

The preparation of children for the Sacraments is the most important work and delight of a Sister of Notre Dame. Sister Superior constantly reminded the Sisters of their responsibility and privilege in this connection. When the children in the different schools were about to make their First Communion she would ask the prayers of the Community and Students for them, promising them in return the prayers of those little ones to whom Our Lord was coming for the first time. When the great day arrived they would pay a never-to-be-forgotten visit to the Convent, there to receive from Sister Superior's hand a medal or a sacred picture and to hear from her lips words of simple piety and sweetness, the fragrance of which would cling for ever about the memories of the happiest day of their lives.

The Superior-General—Mère Aloysie—was prevented by her

age and infirmities from making her usual visitation of the English houses, and in the spring of 1887 she appointed as her deputy Sister Marie Thérésia. Great was the joy of all at Mount Pleasant when the announcement was made, and great were the preparations for what might well be called her homecoming. She arrived in London on April 25, Sister Mary of St. Philip joining her at Clapham, and they were at Liverpool on May 10, having visited Plymouth in the interim.

For three months Sister Marie Thérésia remained in England, during the greater part of the time making Mount Pleasant her headquarters, and visiting therefrom all her Convents in the north. It was a busy, but none the less a happy, time for her, and for all those in the house who knew and loved her. She visited the various Departments of Mount Pleasant, went to several of the Elementary Schools, and everywhere she was met by familiar faces whose smiling welcome was an earnest of grateful memories of her past kindness.

She took part in all the household functions as in days of old, and assisted at the rejoicings over the Jubilee of Queen Victoria with much pleasure and enthusiasm.

The weeks passed all too quickly, and when the hour of parting came she addressed the Community in a few simple but consoling words; she told them how she had at first dreaded the thought of coming back to Mount Pleasant; "but," she continued, "I am glad now, and it has been a great consolation to see you all again. It has given me much pleasure to see how well everything is going on, and how happily and cheerfully God's work is being done. He has indeed blessed our mutual sacrifice. You must all pray for me; it is not that my work at Namur is so much greater than it was here, but it is so different. When I do not know how to act I go to Our Blessed Mother's tomb and there I pray and think of you all."

She wrote from Northampton :

"DEAR SISTER MARY OF ST. PHILIP, "

"I have not trusted myself to write till now; my heart was too full. When the train set off to carry me so far from you all, it was then I realised how much I love you all. And now I write to thank you for all your goodness to me.

You made my stay with you so happy—not giving way to your deep feelings, being so affectionate and yet so religious. That dear visit to Mount Pleasant will long be cherished in my memory. And now you must not forget me in your prayers whilst I, on my part, promise you a souvenir every day. Let us hope to meet soon again and let us try to love our dear Lord better and better until we meet never to part any more.

“Your affectionate,

“SISTER MARIE THÉRÉSIA.”

The usual retreat for former students was given at the end of July by the Reverend Father Anderdon, S.J. Sister Superior was anxious to impress upon all that to them she was still the Sister Mary of St. Philip they had known and trusted. “I am the very same to you,” she says at one of her conferences, “not ‘Sister Superior,’ but ‘Sister Mary of St. Philip.’ Indeed I hear the dear saint’s name but too seldom now, so I hope the old students will still give me that pleasure.” One of those present wrote of this retreat: “All went on as of old. There was the same School Management conference, the same dear voice, the same wise direction. The chief topics discussed were the most practical means for making religious instruction tell upon the lives and conduct of our pupils; how we should aim at making them good, rather than merely clever; how girls who have left school might be influenced by confraternities and periodical meetings.”

And she begged them on their part to keep in touch with the College, to come to her in their need, to correspond with the Sisters and not to lose sight of the apostolic spirit as their vocational ideal: “We are called to be apostles, and no brilliant success in secular education can ever atone for failure to train our pupils to become good Catholics. Now we cannot make the children good if we ourselves are not so. They will always pay more attention to what we do than to what we say; hence, beautiful precepts and good instructions lose their value unless we live them as well as teach them. We must *show* the children how to lead good lives.”

As she had foreseen in 1868, the system of payment by results was doomed to failure, though it was long in dying. The death-knell was sounded in 1887 by the report of a Royal Commission whose finding was that the system “made managers

and teachers mercenary, and children and teachers mechanical." Adverting to this, she reminds her old students: "You must think of eternal results, however, now and always. You are working for the souls of your children. Remember with what fervour you sang the hymn, 'Apostles of Jesus,' in your College days, and do not lose sight of your high ideals."

Sister Superior paid a visit to Namur in the spring of 1888. She found Sister Marie Thérésia's health not very satisfactory, though there did not at this time seem to be any reason for grave anxiety. Together they visited some of the Belgian houses of Notre Dame, and Sister Marie Thérésia gained much benefit by the change of air.

From the Ardennes Sister Superior wrote to her students:

"St. Hubert,
"March 15, 1888.

"MY DEAR CHILDREN,

"I have been wishing to thank you for the nice letter you wrote me, but I thought I would wait till I had something interesting to tell you. And now I am sure you will like to hear about a little expedition I have been making with Sister Superior to visit three of our Convents in what is called the district of the Ardennes. You must look on the map of Belgium for Marche, St. Hubert and Bastogne, if you wish to follow our route. The Ardennes form the most beautiful part of Belgium—great part consists of a table-land from 1200 to 1500 ft., above the level of the sea; and it is on this plateau that Bastogne stands. But Marche and St. Hubert are surrounded by rocky hills and immense forests abounding in deer and wild boars—even wolves are said still to exist there. Ask Sister Mary of St. Joseph to look out for you in Walter Scott's *Quentin Durward* the part about William de la Marck, surnamed the 'wild boar of the Ardennes,' and you will see what sort of people lived here in olden times.

"We spent Monday at Marche. The Convent is a very pretty building, half Gothic, half Moorish in its architecture, standing nearly at the foot of some beautiful wooded hills. The highest of these hills (called *le grand Tière*) is in the Sisters' grounds; and they have besides a rapid stream forming little waterfalls and running into a large pool—on the four sides of which are grassy terraces shaded by lofty fir-trees. We went

up to the top of the hill and there we found a statue of St. Joseph—a very large one, which had to be dragged up there on sledges. We looked down upon a lovely view; on one side the hill sloped gradually down to the valley, on the other there was an almost perpendicular precipice and the rushing stream beneath. You may imagine what a beautiful picture it made.

“On Tuesday morning we set off at 8 a.m. for Bastogne—about three hours off by rail—(made four by waiting at a junction for a branch train); we first went through scenery very much like Buxton and the Peak—we seemed to be gradually mounting, and the weather got colder and colder. At last we were on the great table-land of the Ardennes—a region of bare moorland, with nothing but fir-trees, broom and heath. Even the hedges were of evergreen fir. A warm welcome awaited us at Bastogne, which is the chief town of the Ardennes. The Convent is very large, having a Boarding School for 60 or 70, the Training School containing about 60 students, and the Practising Schools with over 300 children. All these had to be seen, and this took every moment of our time from Tuesday at 12½ to Thursday morning at 5½. The boarders and students together gave Sister Superior a grand reception—beautiful singing, and addresses read both in French and English; one of the boarders played the violin remarkably well. Then we went through the schools for a cursory glance at all that was going on. The students are in *three* years there, instead of two, so they have three classes in the *École Normale*—in three different rooms. They were just having their Easter examinations (a good deal done orally). In the Second Year room they were being examined in mental arithmetic, and each student was called out to the blackboard to work out problems mentally, putting down each result and saying the reason of everything, and the methods. They did all their working out loud. We had Benediction that evening—the chapel, so full, reminding us of Liverpool. The *Sainte Famille*¹ is the room which Louis XVIII. of France slept in during Napoleon’s ‘Hundred Days.’ Look in your histories for that.

“On Wednesday we had a very full day. The weather was milder, so we went all over the grounds—flower garden, kitchen

¹ The Community room in Convents of Notre Dame is always called by this name.

garden, etc., near the house, and beyond these a sort of park—several large meadows surrounded and intersected by the most delicious avenues of fir-trees—not the dark Scotch fir, but a beautiful luxuriant evergreen (bright green) pine—lovely places for the girls to study in—and in one part a raised grassy mound encircled by the pine trees, where they have tea in summer.

“After going through the Practising Schools, I spent the whole afternoon and part of evening listening to lessons—a drawing lesson on shading solids, a geometry lesson to children, a model lesson on composition by the First Mistress of the Training School, Sister Marie Florentine; and three lessons by students. The composition lesson was on Winter—I had one of the same sort at Cognelée, where I attended a Teachers’ Conference, and I was very much struck with the careful way in which they teach their children *how to compose*—giving ideas by questioning, putting them into such a variety of language—so much more pains taken with language there. A student gave a dictation lesson, and another a lesson on ‘The Aspect and Productions of the Province of Luxembourg,’ with a good map on blackboard. All the Third Year Students were present (scarcely as old as our Second Year, as they begin their First Year at 16). They criticised very well. All had to write down the steps of the lesson, and to read the summary from their notes. The faults were very much the same as ours, but language of both students and children much better.

“In the evening we had what they called a *soirée gymnastique*—students and boarders all together. The students with poles and dumb-bells accompanied by piano and sometimes with very pretty singing. A good deal of marching was brought in, and they always took their places by forming a square—and then the four rows stretched out arms and moved, so as to be at arm’s-length from each other. The boarders’ exercises were very pretty indeed, all done with ribbons which they moved about so gracefully, marching in all sorts of figures. They were all such nice genial girls—four or five English amongst the boarders, one from Glasgow. On Thursday morning we left Bastogne very reluctantly; everything there was so charming and so suggestive—at 5½ we heard Mass, at 6 we stepped into a kind of pony chaise—open, with a hood—drawn by a *mule*—which had been at the battle of Sedan in the Franco-Prussian

War; it belongs to the Convent—a most primitive concern! The driver was the gardener in a blouse. We took the train for St. Hubert, a village in the Ardennes celebrated for its magnificent Church where *le grand St. Hubert* continues to work marvellous cures on persons bitten by mad dogs. We were set down at Poix, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from St. Hubert, in the loveliest mountain valley. We had to travel to St. Hubert in a steam-train—but it really was a pretty little miniature train—one or two long carriages all windows, so that we could see the scenery. In twenty minutes we were at the Convent. After dinner we visited the Church; quite as large as Westminster Abbey. Magnificent Gothic, perpendicular or decorated style, about date of Tudors, early sixteenth century. Such a treat to see such a Church as that in Belgium. We saw St. Hubert's stole and were blessed with a portion of it. My time is up! Love to you all.

"Your very affectionate

"SISTER MARY OF ST. PHILIP."

One is reminded of those letters in which the Fanny of olden days shared with her friends the pleasures of her travels and pilgrimages, but she writes now, perhaps, with greater directness and simplicity. Her busy life left her but little time to practise the graces of mere literature in her correspondence, but, on the other hand, her personal notes—whether of congratulation or condolence, of praise or reproof, of counsel or of warning—went straight from her own great heart to the heart of her correspondent. Her sister Monica, whom we have known as Dame Margaret Mary, O.S.B., wrote later in this connection:

"I am very sorry we have no letters of Fanny's to send you. She used to write delightful letters before she went to Namur, but since she became a Sister of Notre Dame she seems to have studied greater simplicity, and, besides, never has time now for anything but a hurried note."

Even with students and schoolmistresses she observed the same apostolic sobriety—sympathetic always, affectionate often, her letters are wonderfully short and simple. It was a most touching revelation of her maternal love, and of their filial devotedness to find that, when an appeal was made for this biography, all her old students had kept every letter, every postcard, every least line she had ever sent them.

should send her, on her feast-day, instead of flowers and cards, a modest sum towards the fund: "Just put two or three stamps into your Christmas letter," she said on one occasion, "and we shall appreciate them more than a card that is worth three times as much. Even one stamp will be most acceptable; and no one need scruple to send it, for, after all, it is a portrait of our most gracious Queen Victoria!" Later on it became usual for each former student to send her the sum of one shilling on St. Philip's Day: "When you send me a shilling," she said, "I am quite happy because I know you can spare it. When you send more I am afraid that you are depriving yourself of something that you need, and I should not like that."

At an annual reunion of Old Students she delicately reminds them to apply to her for a loan whenever they need it: "This is quite your own money, you know, and I am only too delighted to give you some when you need it."

If she suspected financial difficulties she did not wait for an appeal:

"I am sending you the enclosed for your journey to Bournemouth, as I suppose you will be going in a day or two. Reverend Mother can put down to my account anything in the way of extras. You must tell me if you are comfortable and have all you require."

One of her old children has to go to a hospital for an operation, and it comes to Sister Superior's ears that she dreads the thought of a public ward:

"I expect to see you on Monday evening. I am quite determined that you shall have a private room. If *your* means are limited, *mine* are not. Think of St. Philip's Fund with at least £10 interest to the good and *great expectations*!! I shall write to the hospital and engage a private room for you for Tuesday. Dr. B. will be here to-day and will tell me how to manage it.

"I am writing lying down, as you may see by my calligraphy. I hope to be released soon from this irksome position. Keep up your courage, dear, we are all praying for you."

To another she writes:

“I wish you could manage to come to the retreat. If expense stands in the way I could easily manage that.”

To one who has sent an offering:

“So many thanks for the welcome offering and for your kind remembrance of my feast-day. It was only this morning that I had the pleasure of sending several pounds out of the Fund to enable an old student just recovering from a dangerous illness to have change of air. No one knows half the good the Fund has done. May St. Philip reward the contributors.”

In April, Sister Superior was back at Mount Pleasant and writing to Sister Mary Patricia, then resident at Namur, thanking her for good news of Sister Marie Thérésia’s health. Great was the consternation, therefore, when on May 14 a telegram arrived announcing her death. The whole household mourned the loss of one who as Superior for many years had been so truly mother, friend, and guide. To Sister Mary of St. Philip the blow was heavy, but with her usual self-forgetfulness she writes to Sister Mary Patricia:

“In my own overwhelming grief I do not forget you, and I feel so much for you and all the dear Sisters at Namur, who loved our dear Sister Superior. We must think of the peace and joy which are hers. Her spirit seems always near us here—nearer than ever now. What a crown will be hers! Do write to me. I would like to hear all about her. I knew nothing of the fresh attack on Friday; the first intelligence was the terrible telegram on Monday morning. How hard it is to say *Fiat!* There are so many pangs that are like swords in one’s heart. Write soon. Others can tell me about the funeral, but it is concerning the time before the end that I want to hear.”

And a few days later:

“I can scarcely write yet, about our great sorrow—at least I cannot write as calmly as I should like, and I have to keep stopping for my tears. You must pray, and get more graces for me on Corpus Christi, to enable me to say a more loving and a more generous *Fiat!*”

On May 18 a solemn Pontifical Requiem was celebrated at Mount Pleasant for the repose of Sister Marie Thérésia’s soul:

"The Gregorian Chant was rendered with great feeling and effect," wrote Sister Mary of St. Philip, "and when at the Offertory there arose for her, who had so often knelt before that Altar, the *Jesu Salvator Mundi*, there seemed to be a special pathos in that most human refrain, *Saltem vos amici mei*, sung as it was by the voices of those who had so long known and revered her, and falling on the ears of that kneeling, sorrowing throng—the friends and children for whom she had spent herself to the last. Ah! who could have more friends to take pity on her than one of whom it was so truly said that no one ever came near her without being the better for it, or without receiving some kindness from her!"

One who lived in religion for many years under Sister Marie Thérésia thus writes of her:

"To her Sisters and all who came in contact with her she was a shining example of the union between Martha and Mary, of which Saint Teresa speaks so highly, and which is the very essence of the life of a Sister of Notre Dame. Whilst encouraging her community to the utmost in their strenuous life, which she so joyously shared, she would suffer no weakening of the contemplative side of their vocation. She would exhort them 'to pray like Carmelites, and work like Sisters of Charity!' And in all, Sister Mary of St. Philip was one with her. Those who have known these two gifted and saintly women will recall how beneath the habit of Notre Dame they cherished the spirit of Carmel—the double spirit of penance and prayer handed down to her children by Blessed Julie Billiart."

In the month of June, God called to the reward of her long labours the venerable Superior-General, Mère Aloysie Mainy. Her death, though not unexpected, was a cause of deep sorrow in every house of Notre Dame. She had done valuable work for her Institute, and had endeared herself to all by the sweetness and kindliness of her gentle rule. The Superiors of the Belgian and English Houses met at Namur in July for the election of her successor. Sister Aimée de Jésus—who had been the first Superior of the old house on Islington Flagg, Liverpool, some thirty-five years before—was elected Superior-General. These great changes at the Mother-House involved changes in the secondary houses, and Sister Superior knew, when she left

Namur after the election, that Sister Mary Patricia was to return to Liverpool, whilst the First Mistress of the College, Sister Thérèse of the Passion, would replace her at Namur. This led to the appointment of Sister Mary of St. Joseph as First Mistress, in the following January. Her gentle, humble, unobtrusive manner, concealing a firmness of will and a directness of purpose truly remarkable, made her a powerful instrument for good with all the students. But, perhaps, her most characteristic virtue was her selflessness. She lived for others—for her Superior, for her colleagues, and for her students.

The many educational changes which took place at this time, and to which reference has been made in an earlier chapter, brought with them a great access of work for Sister Superior, both in the matter of correspondence and of personal interviews. Her wide and varied experience, her clarity of mind, her sound judgment, her foresight, and her ready charity, induced many school managers and teachers to seek her advice and aid in their difficulties. On one occasion she had just left the convent to begin her journey to Namur when a priest called to see her. The Sister Portress, a foreigner, with a somewhat sad cast of countenance, said in a tone of polite regret: “Ah, Father, I am grieved to say *Sister Superior is departed.*”

“Good Heavens,” exclaimed the visitor, “I have lost my best friend,” and he turned away sadly. Next morning he offered Mass for the repose of her soul. When the story was told to her later she laughed merrily, and said: “Poor Father N. ! You see I always write his Government letters for him.”

The death of Mr. Stokes on August 1, 1891, was the breaking of another link with the past. Sister Superior recalled to the Community, and to her Students both past and present, the deep debt of gratitude which Mount Pleasant owed to this dear friend and trusted guide, and she begged their prayers and good works for the repose of his soul.

In the following month Sister Thérèse of the Passion died at Namur after a short illness. She had been one of the first pupils of the Sisters of Notre Dame in Liverpool. From the High School she passed on to the boarding-school at Namur, and entered the noviciate in 1859. From 1863 to 1889 she worked devotedly on the Training College Staff. Her fine presence, her unfailing urbanity, her wide culture, and her

practical mind, won for her the respect and affection of the students, whilst her great piety and love of regular observance edified all who knew her intimately.

In 1891, Sister Superior had the transept of the Convent Chapel converted into a small chantry in remembrance of the two beloved Superiors to whom Mount Pleasant was so deeply indebted—Sister Mary of St. Francis and Sister Marie Thérésia. Desiring her students to take part in the memorial scheme, she asked them to allow her to use a small part of *St. Philip's Fund* for the purpose. This, it may be stated, was the only occasion on which she departed from the rule, which she herself had made, that the *Fund* was to be used exclusively for the needs of past students.

"The latest addition to the memorial chapel," she tells them at the retreat, "is the beautiful statue of the Sacred Heart with its niche not yet complete. The idea of the artist is to finish the niche by six carved angels, on tiny pedestals surrounding the canopy. I have already enough money to defray the cost of five angels, and I should like the Students to give the sixth from the *Fund*. Each angel is to be provided with some musical instrument, and you may choose for *your* angel what it shall be." There was no need to consider. The sixth angel bears a *harp*.

Meanwhile her influence was reaching further and further as the number of her old students increased. Not only in the schools and homes of Great Britain, but as wives or mothers, or in responsible positions won by the results of their early training, her pupils were to be found in every part of the world.

In 1892, Mr. Hunnybun, Secretary of the Catholic School Committee, in his address to the Students in training said :

"Many years ago while travelling in Scotland I heard in all directions of this Institution and its head. 'Don't you know the Training College? Don't you know Sister Mary of St. Philip?' one after another asked me. And again, when passing through narrow streets in an island in the Mediterranean with my wife, I saw a crowd of barefooted children coming out of a big house. They had tidy hair, and clean pinafores—real English pinafores—an unusual sight in Malta. Who were their teachers? Again I heard of Sister Mary of St. Philip and the Liverpool Training College. So you see in the far

north and in the sunny south, I have come across that high reputation of which you have a right to be proud—which you too may be privileged to carry into all parts of the world.”

As early as 1882 the Maltese Government had applied to the Liverpool Training College for admission for two teachers from Valetta. They were good students and both secured the Teacher’s Certificate. A year after their return to Malta, M. Savona, Director of Education in Malta, asked for permission to send four more candidates. He was induced to do so, he said, by “the success achieved by the two teachers sent to Liverpool, in the schools entrusted to them, the improvements they have introduced, the management and organisation of their schools, and the intellectual and moral results obtained.”

Again in 1887–88 there were two Maltese students in training, and, as before, they made such use of their time as to obtain certificates. They have done good work in their island since then, and are worthy of as high praise as M. Savona gave their predecessors in 1883. It is pathetic to find amongst the letters of Sister Mary of St. Philip one addressed to her, by one of these students of 1888. It is dated December 19, 1904, the day after her death. When it reached Liverpool, the eyes that would have read it with such pleasure were closed for ever.

“*Valetta,*
“*December 19, 1904.*”

“VERY DEAR SISTER SUPERIOR,

“I avail myself of the first spare moment, to answer your dear letter of 19th September last. I thank you for the photographs of the new building. I showed them to Misses Camilleri, Ferris, Collins, La Corte, and to others that you do not know. I thank you also for the list of drills. . . . Lately we have been busy with processions of devotion in honour of the Jubilee of Our Lady’s Immaculate Conception. The crowned silver picture of Our Lady by St. Luke, was brought in a pilgrimage from Notabile to Valetta, and the children of the different schools followed, from the Sakkaja Square in Notabile, to St. John’s Square in Valetta, singing hymns. . . . And now, dear Sister Superior, I wish you a very happy Christmas and a bright and holy New Year. May the Babe of Bethlehem shower upon you, the dear Sisters, and all the College, His choicest gifts! May the Notre Dame College always

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be first! *Ad maiorem Dei gloriam!* Good-bye, dear Sister Superior; in a year or two I hope to be able to come to see you.

“Ever your most affectionate child,

“S. B.”

Early in 1892, Sister Teresa of St. Joseph, the Lucy Wallis of Nottingham Place days, was called to her reward. She had been a devoted colleague of Sister Mary of St. Philip from the earliest days of the Training College, until failing health compelled her to give up her work. She promoted devotion to the Sacred Heart through the Apostleship of Prayer, with characteristic zeal. For ten years she was practically confined to her room by ever-increasing infirmities, which she bore with heroic patience. Sister Mary of St. Philip was deeply moved by the loss of one who was bound to her by triple tie as friend, sister, and spiritual daughter, but now, as always, she strengthened her soul with the thought of the Eternal Years.

It was about this time that a well-known priest in the south of England wrote to Sister Mary of St. Philip calling her attention to the need for a small book of simple explanations of the text of the Catechism. This was not the first time she had been approached on the subject, for her old students had often asked her to bring out books of this kind which would help them to prepare their children for Confession and Holy Communion. Sister Mary of St. Philip set a competent Sister to work on *Confession*, but when the booklet was ready for publication an unexpected set-back occurred. Then, as now, opinion varied greatly with regard to the necessity and value of such explanations. Certain conservative minds feared lest the simple and homely language might detract from the dignity of the subject, and that though the children gained in knowledge they might lose in reverence. But a majority in favour of the idea carried the day, and *Confession* was published in 1892 with the *Imprimatur* of the Bishop of Salford (afterwards Cardinal Vaughan). It proved such a success that *Communion* quickly followed, and His Lordship gave his special blessing to the undertaking. Though Sister Mary of St. Philip had originally intended to issue only three booklets, the supply created further demand, and the whole Catechism has now been covered in a series of seventeen booklets, which have a wide circulation both in Great Britain and in the Colonies.

CHAPTER XVI

A VALIANT WOMAN

"The Institute must be composed of valiant souls, of courageous and magnanimous hearts, of persons who never say 'it is enough' in the matter of perfection and apostolic devotedness."—BLESSED JULIE BILLIART.

GOD calls souls to His service in Religion in ways that often baffle mere human judgment. Some are drawn to a manner of life which seems completely out of harmony with their natural gifts and tendencies, and the worldly-minded exclaim at the apparent waste, whilst the spiritual-minded recognise yet one more instance of God's "heart-shattering" way with His creatures. Others are called to a life for which, even humanly speaking, they are eminently suited by gifts, by training, and by natural character. This would seem to have been His way with Sister Mary of St. Philip when He called her to serve Him in the Institute of Notre Dame. Its life of work and prayer, its spirit of charity, simplicity and obedience, its aim—the sanctification of its members by the exercise of apostolic zeal for the Christian education of youth—all were consonant with her natural character and aspirations.

From her early youth Frances Mary Lescher had longed to draw souls to Christ, she had laboured and prayed for this end, and she had counted the world well lost if by renouncing it she could succeed in achieving her apostolic aim. Her character was strong, ardent, and simple. Her education had been planned on such wide, practical lines, that, whilst developing her natural powers, it had trained her to recognise and respect the powers of others. She was, therefore, as more than one has said of her, "a 'born' Sister of Notre Dame," a soul whom Blessed Julie would have welcomed as her spiritual daughter.

The Rule of the Institute of the Sisters of Notre Dame lays down sharply defined boundaries for the government and

conduct of its members, thus ensuring a uniform and corporate spirit. Yet it is so wisely conceived, so generously planned that, at the same time, it allows healthy liberty for individual manifestations of that spirit. Blessed Julie knew that the surest road to perfection was to sanctify one's natural character, to range oneself on the side of God, and to make use of one's talents in His service. This respect for the individuality of souls stands out again and again in the story of her saintly life. She had a wonderful gift of discrimination in seeing both actual and potential gifts in those with whom she came in contact. She watched their development with the loving solicitude of a mother; she knew when to use the spur, and when to use the curb, but, above all, she knew the value of patience. "We must go step by step in dealing with souls," she says; "we must follow the spirit of the good God, a spirit of patience, of long patience. Have we not ourselves been the object of it?" This patience and this respect for individuality have become, thank God, traditional in the government of the Institute.

When Frances Mary Lescher entered the noviciate at Namur in 1858, wise and experienced Superiors quickly discerned her worth. They saw in her an instrument for a great work which the Institute had just been asked to undertake, and we have already seen how generously she accepted the task, and how loyally she corresponded with the freedom of action so wisely allowed to her by her Superiors. Yet, great teacher, organiser, and leader as she was, to her Sisters in religion, and, indeed, to all who came into close contact with her, she was, above all else, a great religious. Her own natural simplicity of soul, and the traditional simplicity which Blessed Julie desired her daughters to cultivate, are alike responsible for the absence of anything in the way of personal notes which would serve as a record of her interior life. Again, it was characteristic of her, as it is also, of the Institute, to have a great respect for "the secret of the King," to love, indeed, to speak of good and holy things, but to be reserved in expressing one's spiritual experiences. Hence the biographer is thrown back to a certain extent on the testimony of others who lived and worked with her, and on her spiritual conferences to her Community, which, as all who know her agree in saying, she had practised faithfully before she had uttered. Yet, what seems like a drawback may, in matter of fact, prove an advantage, inasmuch as it will

enable the reader to focus his attention on characteristic actions, which are so often a more reliable testimony of a person's true self than are her written words.

Sister Mary of St. Philip's attraction to prayer was one of the most outstanding characteristics of her spiritual life. As a Sister of Notre Dame she had, of course, special hours set apart for the exercise of meditation and vocal prayers, but she seemed to live and work in an atmosphere of prayer. In the street, in garden, or corridor, one was accustomed to see her, Rosary in hand, with that look of peace and recollection which told that earthly affairs were, for a space, laid aside, and that her soul was resting in the consciousness of God's presence.

When unexpected pressure of work had encroached upon her time of prayer, she would be seen kneeling in the chapel late in the evening, making good the losses incurred through the extra labour of the busy day. And when she foresaw occasions such as these, she would, with the permission of Superiors, arise an hour or two in advance of the Community, so that her work might not deprive her of one minute of the time which the rule lays down for direct intercourse with God.

Her remarkable power of concentration may have made it easier for her, than for many others, to plunge herself straight into prayer after some engrossing external occupation, and—as was once said of her—to say even her grace after meals with “her eyes, her nose, and her everything”; but it was more than natural concentration that kept her so absorbed before the Blessed Sacrament. “You seem able to leave all distractions at the door of the chapel, like St. Bernard,” said a Sister to her one day. She smiled and did not deny. “I think it is in our family,” she answered simply, “I have always been able to do that.” But such concentration and absorption as hers was in large measure the reward of fidelity and personal effort in prayer. Over and over again to her Sisters as to her students she emphasises the necessity of studying the science of Prayer, of becoming experts in the praise of God.

Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament was the central fact of her spiritual life. Who that heard her make the well-known acts of reparation to the Blessed Sacrament, either at the time of the *Quarant Ore* devotions, or at the daily “visit” of the Community, will ever forget the mingled tones of love, sorrow, and reverence with which she uttered the words? Her spirit

of ardent faith was reflected in the care she took to adorn and beautify the chapel, and the fervour with which she celebrated the great Feasts of the Church.

On her Sisters she constantly urged the practice, traditional in the Institute, of paying frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament during the day. "Save up all your little confidences for Our Lord," she would say, "and find a few minutes to tell them to Him." In this way did she herself realise the gracious presence of Emmanuel. To be the "spouse of the Blessed Sacrament" was to her the crowning grace and glory of the Religious Life, a cause of constant joy and thanksgiving, as well as of deep humility and wonder.

The traditions of Our Lady's Training College are a perpetual remembrance of Sister Mary of St. Philip's devotion to Mary. She constantly reminded her Sisters that they were Our Lady's "own children," since they had been called to serve God "in the company of the glorious Blessed Virgin Mary." And as she herself had so faithfully kept the Feasts of Our Lady during her long life, so it was fitting that on the Feast of Mary's Expectation she was called Home.

Devotion to the Holy Angels is a legacy bequeathed to the Sisters of Notre Dame by their holy Foundress. Sister Mary of St. Philip had loved and invoked the Angels from her childhood's days, and she ascribed to their intercession countless favours she had received. When Sisters or students complained of the difficulty they found in managing certain pupils, or when they were anxious about their spiritual welfare, she would say: "But, my dear, have you prayed to the Angel Guardians?" During the month of October she strove to make all under her renew themselves in the pious practice of silently saluting the Angel Guardians of those whom they met. At her request the following prayer composed by Sister Mary Xavier was authorised and indulgenced by the Bishop of Liverpool:

"PRAYER TO CHILDREN'S ANGEL GUARDIAN

"O Blessed Spirits, to whose keeping these little ones are entrusted, I pray you that as, by God's special favour, I have entered into this your ministry, so you will ever help me to work with you and not against you. Do you, who see always the Face of their Father and mine, open my eyes to see His

image in each one of them, to penetrate in all my teaching, below the exterior, to their precious and immortal souls.

"Never let me, by word or deed, scandalise one of them. Make me, like you, reverent, faithful, gentle, long-suffering and unselfishly devoted in their regard. When they are dull, do you shine on their intelligence; when they are idle, do you stimulate their wills; when they are hard or stubborn, touch their hearts for me.

"Sleeping or waking, fold your wings round them to keep them unspotted from the world. Whisper in their ears sweet things of Heaven, of their Mother Mary and of Jesus. And when you speak to Him of them, speak also of me, that, with you, I may lead them to His love here, and His glory hereafter.—AMEN."

Loving God, Mary, the Angels, and Saints as she did, and in her great faith rejoicing in the love they bore for her, she loved also the souls of all confided to her care. For well-nigh fifty years she laboured and toiled at Mount Pleasant, giving generously of her best to further the great cause of Catholic Education. In spite of its many-sided interest, the work of teaching necessarily implies a certain amount of monotony and routine, but Sister Mary of St. Philip, though she must have experienced this at times, never betrayed it. To us the founding and developing of the Training College stands out as the great act of her life; but to her it meant the performance of numberless arduous actions, faithfully persevered in, without a thought of self, for well-nigh fifty years. "Down with nature, up with grace," was one of Blessed Julie's watchwords, from which, in her discharge of the duties assigned to her, Sister Mary of St. Philip seemed to draw her inspiration. Those who knew her most intimately say that next to her love for the Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady, came her love for the poor. One of the greatest consolations she had was that her life was devoted and consecrated to their service. She felt with our holy Foundress that "the poor are the benediction of our Institute," and she loved to remind her Sisters that by their vow of poverty they had identified themselves with the poor of Christ. She herself set a shining example of faithful observance in this matter. She used to say that in all convents where the great work of education is carried on there is danger lest the conveniences and appliances necessary for the work should

diminish opportunities for the practice of Holy Poverty by the members of the Community. All the more reason, therefore, she urged, that they should detach themselves in spirit from all that was not of strict necessity, and that they should rejoice when called upon to feel the discomfort and inconvenience of a life of poverty.

One of the most remarkable characteristics of Sister Mary of St. Philip was her truly grand simplicity—her singleness of thought and purpose. Diplomacy, self-interest, worldliness—all these were utterly foreign to her, and, when she came across them in others, she vanquished them by her sincerity, her selflessness and her other-worldliness. Like St. Paul she had but one desire, to bring others to the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. From the day when she had set her face steadfastly towards Jerusalem, she had never once looked back. All her work, all her aims, all her desires were tested by the standard of God's honour and glory. Her sound judgment, allied with her singleness of purpose and her long experience, gave her an insight with regard to men and affairs which was a great asset to her, both as a Superior and an educationist. She saw and foresaw much more clearly than many who, equally zealous, were yet less gifted in the art of reading signs and portents. Hence it was that her actions were occasionally misinterpreted, but she could afford to wait for the sequel which, practically always, vindicated her policy and principles.

She was the avowed enemy of wordliness, no matter what disguise it assumed. Over and over again she insisted on the width of the gulf between the religious spirit and the worldly spirit, and if she saw any tendency on the part of her Sisters to judge or act by a standard of worldly weights and measures, she would at once admonish them. As she advanced in years, the ever-encroaching tide of materialism, which she watched with anxious eyes, was a cause of real spiritual anguish to her, and she redoubled her efforts and prayers that those entrusted to her by God should remain untouched by it.

As a simple religious she had shown her greatness of soul by her unswerving fidelity to her Superiors at all times and under all circumstances. Now that she was herself placed in a position of authority, her obedience to her chief Superiors was no less marked. Her loyalty to the Institute and to her Mother-General was shown in countless ways—in the affection with

which she spoke of them, in the care she showed in conforming in the smallest details to the customs of the Mother-House, in the multiplicity of ways and means she devised to maintain in its integrity and first fervour the spirit which animates the Institute of Notre Dame. She paid frequent visits to Namur, and always on her return she would describe the vivid impression made on her by the regular observance of the Sisters of the Mother-House, striving thus to arouse in her own Community a desire of emulating them; nor were her efforts vain.

Like all characters built on broad and generous lines, Sister Mary of St. Philip had the defects of her qualities. She was intensely ardent, intensely zealous, and intensely simple; and in her younger days she could not tolerate a lack of these qualities in others. Her indignation, righteous as it was, occasionally led her to speak with warmth to those whom she found wanting in seriousness of purpose, or who neglected the path of duty, or the clear voice of conscience. But, if she felt that she had been too severe in her reproof, the humility with which she asked pardon of the person whom she feared to have hurt unduly, left an ineffaceable memory.

In the same way her own magnificent and untiring zeal sometimes made it difficult for weaker spirits to keep up with her, and, though she was never exacting or inconsiderate, she could not always disguise her annoyance with them. But in the same way did she again make amends for what was, in matter of fact, but a passing expression of impatience. As the years passed on, she strove valiantly to overcome these slight faults and defects, till their very outlines melted away in the glow of her tender charity.

The following appreciation written by a man of the world after meeting her for the first time is sufficiently remarkable to find a place here :—

“ I cannot altogether give you my impressions of Sister Superior—she is completely beyond me—but she must have been chosen by a Higher Power than an earthly selection. She gives me the impression that she is absolutely made for her singularly difficult and comprehensive position. I can imagine her asking me to do anything for her, and I know I could not refuse; there is something in her manner that one cannot resist. Supreme command, a born Queen—this sums up my

opinion of her, yet withal there is absolute freedom from condescension. She shakes your hand, looks full in your face—you are at home instantly. I am a little nervous in my disposition; sometimes when I talk to any one who is, I feel, so immeasurably superior to me, I am apt to ‘chatter,’ and to show my nervousness by being thrown a little off my balance. Yet, when I began to talk to Sister Superior, I felt that she knew what I was going to say before I said it, that she could read me through and through, that anything like self-conceit, or exaggeration, was utterly impossible in dealing with her; frankness, openness, and manly treatment were the only weapons to wear in her presence. If I had told a lie, and she were to ask me the simple question ‘*Was it a lie?*’ even if my life depended on it, I *must* tell the truth. Therefore, who more fitted than she for the position she holds? So thought those who appointed her, guided, they must have been, by God Himself. This is the impression she made on me; what it would be on others I cannot say. Maybe, by some natures who will not owe allegiance to any one she may be differently regarded; but she would *command* their respect, whether they would or no. I cannot call to mind any one I ever met about whom I felt quite the same as I do about her. Am I afraid of her? No! a thousand times no! If she were nearer, and I ever felt in difficulty or doubt, were it temporal or spiritual, I should be bound to go to her.”

The Principal of a Church of England Training College, with whom Sister Mary of St. Philip had been on terms of friendly intercourse, wrote as follows to a member of the Mount Pleasant Community. The letters from which the passages are selected were written some years after Sister Mary of St. Philip’s death, but the memories they recall belong to this period, and with others they may fittingly find a place here:

“I often think of Mount Pleasant, and our beloved Sister Mary of St. Philip, who was the centre of everything. It was in 1892 that I first saw her, and what a sight it was! It seemed to me that I had never before seen such a countenance; my heart went out to her, and, as the years passed on, my intercourse by letters never ceased, and my efforts to go to Liverpool to see and hear her never ceased either. I thank God every day for

the wonderful gift and privilege of her friendship. She, more than any one I have known, made me feel she had the vision of God, and the desire to help all with whom she came in contact to share that vision.

"We have had during Lent some lectures on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, and have been studying it with the aid of Bishop Gore's exposition. The chief point dwelt on seems to be the *Joy* that is to be ours, of which we ought to acquire more now. I recall instinctively Sister Mary of St. Philip's joyousness. It impressed me so much the first time I saw her, and continued to impress me to the end. I do believe that the most holy, and those most capable of sympathising with Our Lord, and living in close communion with Him, have this deep well-spring of joy within them. It enables them to live through and beyond the terrible trials and perplexities of this life. To see that it is possible for souls like hers to live thus is a wonderful thing for those who find it hard to believe, submit, and trust."

On another occasion the same writer says :

"As for my thoughts of our beloved Friend, to have known her is one of the blessings of this life for which I am most constantly and unfeignedly thankful. Certainly she satisfied my longing imagination, for from the first moment I saw her she seemed to be the ideal woman realised. And never did this feeling alter except to grow deeper. My whole heart went out to her and the delight of my love and admiration for her seemed to raise me up and up. These words that I met with the other day in a Commentary on the Book of Isaias by Dr. Smith, just express my feelings about her. Speaking of the servant of the Lord he says : 'A man blossoms through his lips; and no man is a prophet whose word is not *the virtue and the flower of a gracious and consecrated life!*' When my sister saw our dear Friend's portrait she exclaimed, 'What a countenance! How full of expression—such benevolence, humour and power!' Was this not all a good interpretation?"

The well-known philanthropist and educationist, Mrs. Sarah Fielden, of Centre Vale, Todmorden, though not a Catholic, was always deeply interested in the work of the Sisters of Notre

Dame, and was a frequent visitor at Mount Pleasant. Later on, she, too, wrote of "the never-forgotten time when dear Sister Superior and I first became friends over the subject so dear to us both. I so well remember the *large* signing of the Cross, needing the movement of the whole arm; in everything she was so thorough and yet so gentle. I recall the rapid directions given in her sweet, low, cultivated voice, and prefaced always by the 'Sister dear!'"

But it was with her Sisters in religion that, above all, Sister Mary of St. Philip was most truly her noble self. To them alone could she reveal the source of all the beauty and goodness which made her what she was. Even her students, who thought they knew her so well, knew not the depths and the heights of the spiritual ideals which she so faithfully pursued. Nor was it, indeed, till she was appointed Superior that the Sisters with whom she had lived intimately for many years fully apprehended the saintliness of her character. True, they had witnessed her life of daily sacrifice, they were edified by her regular observance of her Rule, they saw her absorbed in prayer, they experienced her tender kindness and charity. But of the secrets of her relations with God they could only guess. Now, however, she was their mother and guide; she was in great measure responsible for their spiritual and temporal well-being, and it was her duty not only to propose to them high ideals of perfection, but to enable them to attain them. Out of the abundance of the spiritual treasures stored in her great heart she spoke to her children, and in so speaking almost unconsciously revealed to them the secret of her own life of perfection.

"Never," wrote Father Power, S.J., after her death, "did I know a woman so beloved of women. In head and heart alike she was incomparably great as a guide and mother."

Sister Mary of St. Philip was a living illustration of the truth that "the obedient man shall speak of victory." To live under obedience and yet to retain one's individuality is to be a strong soul, and if by her religious obedience she had gained complete victory over self, so also the example of that obedience had given her an easy victory over the hearts of her spiritual daughters. Her rule was firm yet flexible, strong yet sweet, all-embracing yet individual, definite yet broad. As she had trusted largely to the honour of her students in their fulfilment

of their duties, so now much more did she trust her Sisters. As we have already suggested, she had the great gift, essential to all on whom many depend, of knowing how to delegate her authority. In the large establishment under her rule there were so many different departments that it would have been physically impossible for her—even had it been desirable—to keep in immediate touch with each and all. Realising this, she appointed well-tried and capable subordinates, entrusting them with wide powers of administration and scope for initiative, though she herself took an active interest in all that was going on. She often reminded her Sisters of the liberty of spirit which their Rule conferred, impressing on them that this very liberty was but another obligation of obedience. To be greatly trusted should mean a stronger realisation of the maxim, *noblesse oblige*. She was just as particular in requiring religious submission in the matter of asking permissions, as she was generous and liberal in granting them. Like a mother, she was eminently approachable, and nothing hurt her more than any coldness or reserve on the part of her subjects. She used to say that in religious life the only one whose painful duty was to inflict pain on others was the Superior. Yet when it had to be done she performed the task straightforwardly and courageously, and afterwards acted as if the fault had passed into complete oblivion, as indeed it had.

Rarely had she need to spur her Sisters on in works of devotedness and zeal, but she often had to curb them, for their health's sake; and here again one notes how, good teacher as she was, she knew how to train the wills of others to act rightly, not from outward compulsion, but from inward conviction. She had the secret of making others know their needs, and then desire them. A typical instance of this occurred in the case of a Sister on the College Staff who was threatened with a serious breakdown in health. Sister N. had been struggling to remain at her work, and trying to disguise the fact that she was suffering, but the practised eyes of her Superior divined the truth. The doctor's prescription of prolonged rest and change of air did not meet with the approval of Sister N., though, in compliance with the wish of her Superior, she went to Blackburn to make her annual retreat. Two or three days after her arrival she received the following characteristic letter from Sister Mary of St. Philip :

"The Cloisters."

"I am here with fifteen Sisters; it is a beautiful afternoon. I hope you have the same weather at Blackburn. We shared your floods and cataracts yesterday and thought pitifully of you. I saw Dr. D. yesterday, as I have been very anxious about you. He said you looked wretchedly ill, and that it was absolutely necessary for you to go as far away as possible from your work, and to have perfect rest for a month. He was sure you are making light of what you are suffering. Now will you make my meditation on 'The Three Classes of Men,' and let me know your resolution."

Then she encloses a slip of paper headed

"MEDITATION ON THE THREE CLASSES OF MEN ¹

(*illustrated by Three Nuns*)

"*Argument.*—These nuns are ordered by the doctor to take a long journey for the sake of their health, and stay away a month.

1st Nun. Says she wants no change of air and no travelling. She will sit in the garden at home instead.

2nd Nun. Will not take a long journey but will go a short distance—to Blackburn or Birkdale.

3rd Nun. Will go the whole distance to Skelmorlie,² as ordered, and will remain as long as doctor prescribed.

N.B.—The 3rd Nun's name is Sister N."

Needless to say the next letter Sister Superior sent to Sister N. was addressed to Skelmorlie.

Her considerate kindness took thought for one and all. When she was made Superior she was at pains to impress upon the Community that now her interest was general, that everyone had a right to it. "Remember," she said, "I am just as much interested in those who wield the broom as in those who wield the pen. Do not think that anything is too insignificant to claim my attention." The Scholarship examination, which in those days followed immediately on the dispersal of the students for the long vacation, was a very tiring time for the Sister who

¹ One of the "Exercises" of St. Ignatius.

² The country house of the Glasgow Training College is at Skelmorlie, on the Firth of Clyde.

exercised the functions of Matron. Sister Superior, absent at the Mother-House, writes to the Sister in charge :

“ I am so glad you had such a nice quiet breaking-up. Mind you do not tire yourself out next week, and see that poor little Sister N. does not either. Give her my love, and tell her that four Sisters have been named to help her in the refectory.”

On the aged and infirm members of the Community Sister Mary of St. Philip lavished all the tenderness of a mother. She herself attends to all the little details of their needs, and when she is absent from home she shows her solicitude in her letters to the invalids, or in the directions she sends to others concerning them.

A novice whose health had entirely given way under the stress of Religious life was sent home by order of the doctor to see if change of air and freedom from responsibility would bring about a recovery. She had been one of Sister Mary of St. Philip's students, and just a few days before leaving the noviciate she received the following letter from her :

“ *Mount Pleasant.*

“ My dear little Sister C.

I have been thinking of you constantly for the last week, and I have scarcely ever been in chapel without praying for you, as I know how you will feel under the trial our dear Lord has sent you. I need not tell you how grieved we were to hear of your being ill. At first I longed to have you here to nurse you, but then I saw how much better a chance you would have of getting well if you stay, as the doctor advised, in the south, and can be perfectly free from all duties. You must look at it, dearest child, in the light that we do, as the best means of recovering your strength, and enabling you to return to your Convent home, and to your work for Our Blessed Lord. Your great duty now is to take care of your health, and get well so as to come back to us—to do this you must not fret or worry.”

The change did bring about some amelioration in Sister C.'s condition, though it was evident that she would never be really strong again. Knowing her eager longing to live and die in holy religion, the Reverend Mother-General allowed her to return to the Institute, and Sister Mary of St. Philip asked that she might remain at Mount Pleasant. There she watched over her, gave her light duties to perform, and when, not very long

after her religious profession, Our Lord called her, it was Sister Mary of St. Philip who prepared her child to go to Him.

If her loving-kindness was so universal and yet so individual, so also was her patience. She knew that human nature is weak and that progress on the path to perfection cannot be gauged merely by the number of one's falls. Hence she would not have her Sisters dwell too much on the faults or achievements of the past, but press onward each day, striving to make the present as perfect as possible.

Many admired her natural buoyancy, but something greater than nature was responsible for the bright serenity with which she worked, and suffered all things. She herself divulged the secret. One day a Sister, knowing that she had had serious cause for anxiety, said to her : " I am sorry you have had so much trouble and I am afraid you must be unhappy." " No, my dear, I am quite happy. I have made it a practice never to dwell on what has passed, but just to put my hand into Our Lord's, and let Him lead me where He will." It was said very simply, but it was the key to her life, as it is, indeed, the key to all sanctity. *Solutio omnium difficultatum Christus*, was her motto. She went to Him in all her difficulties, and in His Will was her peace.

One of Blessed Julie's favourite aspirations was : " My Jesus, fasten me tight to Thy blessed Cross, and hold me there, for I am nothing but misery." Worthy daughter of such a mother, Sister Mary of St. Philip constantly prayed : " Lord, help me to do what pleases Thee best, and what costs me most." Her generosity in God's service quickened the generosity of others. One of the greatest happinesses of her happy religious life was to see the zeal with which her Sisters pursued the path of perfection, and when, after their death, she was free to speak of their virtues, she would urge others to strive to imitate them. One instance may well find place here.

Sister M. C., after ten years of devoted labour on the College Staff, was called to her eternal reward in the November of 1898. Sister Mary of St. Philip said to the Community on the day of her death :

" In seeing such a death as Sister M. C.'s, we cannot help thinking of our own death and of the preparation we must make to meet Our Lord, so that we may be as ready to meet Him as

she was. The chief characteristic of her life was fidelity—great exactness in the least things. She led such a self-denying, self-sacrificing life. No one knew the agony of pain she sometimes endured, and yet she went on with her duties to the very end, always cheerful and always trying to hide her suffering. I remember asking her how she could manage to look so joyous, and she told me that she had felt this happiness and joy ever since she had made up her mind to mortify herself in everything. This it was that gave her such peace in the end; there was not a shadow of a cloud to trouble her, she was longing to meet Our Lord.

“Before the end, she asked me if I would pardon her for everything she had done wrong. I really could not think of any fault she had committed, so I asked her what she wished me to forgive. Then she said: ‘Do you remember the last *Holy Hour*?’ I recalled that on the eve of the last First Friday I refused her permission to watch before the Blessed Sacrament after night prayers, as I knew she was not well. However, knowing her fervour, and seeing how keenly disappointed she was, I gave in to her when she urged me to change my decision. Now she said: ‘I ought not to have asked a second time.’ I tried to console her by saying that, as I had given her permission, it was all right, but she still said: ‘No, I ought not to have asked again.’

“I feel very much consoled and comforted when I think of her. It has been a great grace to this house to have such a fervent Sister, and a great grace to this house to see such a happy death. I asked her to obtain the grace for us that we might become a very fervent Community.”

Sister Mary of St. Philip’s charity followed her children beyond the grave. She was most faithful in reminding the Community of the anniversaries of the death of the Sisters who had lived and died at Mount Pleasant, and, whilst asking for prayers for them, she would remind her hearers of the virtues which had characterised them, and of the way in which they had laboured for God’s glory.

Of Sister Marie Thérésia’s work and influence she could never say enough, and her constantly expressed desire was that the Community might never fall away from the high ideals which had been her legacy to them.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SCIENCE OF THE SAINTS

"Put ye on Christ our Lord. Be souls of prayer,
Build all on this—not here alone or there,
But moving, whatsoever path be trod,
With mind and heart uplifted to your God.

Put ye on Christ our Lord, the livelong day,
In selfless labour giving self away,
Choose not, reject not, but unruffled do
Whatever be your Father's Will for you."

SISTER MARY XAVIER.

THE ideals which Sister Mary of St. Philip put before her spiritual daughters from time to time were none other than the ideals conceived by Blessed Julie when she founded her Institute. To pray, to work, and to suffer for the salvation of souls is the very essence of the vocation of a Sister of Notre Dame, and firm confidence and masculine courage are her arms. Over and over again our holy Foundress would say to her first Sisters: "Try to have your hearts always filled with God. If you do not become souls of prayer our Institute will perish. We must have noble souls; there must be nothing little about us; we must have the hearts of apostles." "And," she reminds them, "the Cross is the hall-mark set on all good works which tend to the greater glory of God. You must be sculptured, chiselled by the Cross, if you are to make any progress in the interior life." Prayer, work, and penance are the constant subjects of Sister Mary of St. Philip's spiritual conferences and discourses. She knew, none better, the possible dangers of the apostolic life—the temptation to lose sight of the end in the means, to forget one's own spiritual concerns in concentrating one's forces on those of others, to give way to discouragement and faint-heartedness. But she knew, too, how to translate the "hard sayings" of the counsels of perfection into words of hope, confidence, and encouragement. In her well-known hymn for the Feast of All Saints, written in the

form of a dialogue between the members of the Church Triumphant and of the Church Militant, she puts the following plaint on the lips of the Faithful on earth—

“ Ah, we shrink from pain and sorrow,
We are frightened when we hear,
We must live in constant struggle,
We must die to all that's dear.”

And straightway comes the comforting answer—

“ If the path be rough and thorny
At the end all pain shall cease.
If the battle be a fierce one
There shall be eternal peace.”

She never disguised the perils or the hardships of the road, but she always reminded her Sisters of Him who awaited them at their journey's end, and, by so reminding them, helped them to forget present suffering in the thought of the joy to come. Her words were always very simple, very direct, very convincing, and, above all, very practical. Contemplation and meditation should throw the light forward on Our Lord, Our Lady and the Saints, and then, in their reflected light, we see with contrition our own failures and shortcomings, and—happily, sometimes—with humble thanksgiving our successes and progress.

Love of the Sacred Humanity of Christ, with its consequent self-surrender and self-immolation, is the keynote of all Sister Mary of St. Philip's spiritual themes. A life of self-surrender is a life of union with Him by prayer, work, and penance. Prayer and work cannot be separated in the apostolic life, and fidelity in their practice assumes penance. Again, as she so frequently insists, there can be no standing still on the road to sanctity. Blessed Julie used to say that each day a Sister of Notre Dame should take one step forward to Calvary, and Sister Mary of St. Philip reminds her Sisters that the more we give to God the more He asks of us, but the more also He gives us of Himself.

The following extracts are from notes taken on various occasions by a member of the Community :

OF FAMILIAR INTERCOURSE WITH CHRIST

“ The Gospel of the Feast of the Assumption always strikes me as being something remarkable. The words of Our Lord :

‘Mary hath chosen the better part, and it shall not be taken from her,’ are applied to Our Lady. We may apply them to ourselves, for we, too, have chosen the better part, or rather, Our Lord has chosen it for us. Yet it will not be the better part unless we make it so, unless we realise all that it means, and really feel that we have the better part. Sometimes we may enjoy other things—a little success, approbation, token of affection, or some such trifle, but if we seek our pleasure away from God then we do not realise our high vocation. Let us remember that ‘the better part’ for us is to have a great personal love of our Blessed Lord. Without this love we shall not go securely through our religious life. There are all sorts of difficulties which cannot be overcome except by this personal love of Christ. It is only this personal love that will help us to become saints. It is only when we fear wounding Him in the least little things, when we care about pleasing Him, when we are bent upon offering Him everything, when we are continually giving little things to Him, that we are safe. Our holy Foundress reached a high degree of intimate union with Our Lord, and if we have to live up to the standard of her Rule we, too, must cultivate this spirit of personal love of Christ.”

And again :

“Sometimes we do not sufficiently realise how much Our Lord loves us, and how intimately we ought to know and love Him in return. We must believe that He loves us individually, that He loves us in spite of our faults, that He really cares for us, and likes to have us near Him. It is with Our Lord even as it is with human love. He is very much disappointed when we do not care to converse with Him, do not respond to His love. He cares for us more than any one else, for He made us, He redeemed us, and He knows every fibre of our being. Those weaknesses which distress us He understands, and He alone has the power to set them right. We should, therefore, go to Him to be cured of all our spiritual infirmities. Our Lord is hurt when we are wanting in confidence, when we do not give Him our whole love and trust. He would be so pleased if we kept all our secrets for Him. You know what we feel when a person says to us, ‘Now I would not tell this

to any one else,' and we know that she really means what she says. How we appreciate this mark of friendship! So, when we go to Our Lord, let us say to Him: 'Dear Lord, I want to tell You my secrets, my troubles. I am going to tell You and no one else.' If we go to Him every time we want comfort and consolation, instead of seeking creatures, we shall realise more and more that He is our friend, and gain a more personal love of Him.

"Another practice which may help us is to have some mystery, or place, or time, where we agree to meet Our Lord. At Nazareth, at Bethany, or in the Garden of Gethsemane, you can meet Jesus, converse with Him, and console Him. Or you may join the crowd at the Sermon on the Mount, you may sit with Our Lord and the woman at the well, or you may follow the liturgy of the Church, and have different places for different seasons. But have some plan ready for that mystery or place where you would like to have met Our Lord when He was on earth.

"You may help yourselves, too, by thinking of Him in His various relations to you—as Spouse, Friend, Brother, Guest, King. Some of you may choose to think of Him as Master, because you need so much to be taught by Him. Then you will repeat often to yourselves: 'The Master is come and calleth for thee.'

"Remember, however, that an increase of intimacy with Christ means that we must be prepared for great sacrifices, yet it is well worth while to suffer much in order to increase our love for Our Lord. If He wishes us to cling to His Cross, let us be ready for Him, let us tell Him that we will never count the cost of our trials if they but bring us closer to Him."

OF DEVOTION TO THE HOLY NAME

"The first feeling we ought to cultivate with regard to the Holy Name is *love*. We must try to make our own those feelings of tender piety which found expression on the lips of St. Bernard and so many of the Saints. Let us say the Holy Name very often and always from our hearts.

"Then we must revive our *faith* in that Name so that each time we say it may be an act of confidence in its power; that it may remind us of all the miracles that have been worked

in that Name, of all the devils that have been cast out in that Name and of all that has been promised us in that Name. And if we have this sentiment of the power of the Name of Jesus, we shall both pronounce it ourselves, and teach our children to pronounce it, with the greatest reverence.

“Lastly, there is *zeal* for the glory of the Holy Name, that feeling which is expressed so constantly in the prayers of the Church: ‘Blessed be the Name of Jesus’; ‘Hallowed be Thy Name.’

“Let us go through the day with our hand locked in Our Lord’s Hand. We forget sometimes that He is leading us, just as a child may forget that its mother is leading it. But if we do these things we shall remember we are in Our Lord’s keeping, we shall call Him by name, and there should be no name which so thrills our heart with sympathy as the Name of Jesus. Nothing touches people so much as when we call them by their Christian name. Our Lord, too, likes us to call Him by His Name, that Name foretold by the Angels to His blessed Mother, the Name which means Saviour; and so we may hope that, when we come to die, Our Lord will call us individually by name as He called Saint Mary Magdalen, and that we, too, shall fall at His feet and answer: ‘Rabboni! My Jesus!’

“Let us form a habit of saying this Holy Name in all our trials, temptations and sorrows, so that even when we are unconscious we may still utter it, that when we are dying it may be continually on our lips, and that it may be the last word we utter in death.”

THE SACRED HEART AND THE HIDDEN LIFE

“Let us desire to console the Sacred Heart by our fervent spirit of reparation. When we kneel before the Blessed Sacrament let us ask our Lord to come to our hearts and find a home in them. Ask Him for—

Un regard: ask Him for one glance from His human Eyes on our poor souls, our miseries, our wants. A look of forgiveness, of love, of encouragement.

Une parole: ask Him to say but one word and our souls shall be healed.

Un rayon : ask Him to send a ray of light that we may see what will please Him, what He wants us to do for Him, what He expects of us.

Une étincelle : ask Him to send a spark of fire which will set our hearts aflame with love of Him.

Un petit souffle : ask Him to breathe His life into us that we may live by Him, and for Him alone.

The Sacred Heart is our home, and in it we should lead the hidden life by uniting our will to our Lord's, by willing only what He wills, by detaching ourselves gradually from all creatures till we are alone with God. Then, too, we must strive to forget ourselves, not allowing our minds to dwell upon ourselves as 'ourselves' but identifying our interests and our work with those of Christ. But we cannot hide ourselves exteriorly, nor would it be right to do so. Our 'hidden life' as to the exterior should consist in our own delight at being unnoticed, our own joy in being unknown, our own pleasure in effacing ourselves, and putting others before us. Reverend Mother Aloysie used to give us as our motto: *Vivre à petit bruit*. Let us try to practise it, living without noise, without notice, without praise. The vocation of a Sister of Notre Dame is to be simple and humble, to pray much, and work hard, to live a life of contemplation and action, but thinking very little of self, not praising self and not even praising our Institute. This will endear us to the Sacred Heart, and make us true children of our holy Foundress."

"The spirit of the Feast of the Sacred Heart is a spirit of reparation. Let us make reparation for ourselves and others. We have so much to make reparation for in our own conduct—our coldness, our neglect. Our Lord told Blessed Margaret Mary that what wounded Him most were the wounds He received in the house of His friends, and He feels the faults of His friends more than the outrages of His enemies. It is the Sacred Heart in the Blessed Sacrament that we have wounded, and it is to the Sacred Heart in the Blessed Sacrament that we shall offer our reparation. Let us atone for all Our Lord suffers from the want of respect, coldness, insults and outrages of men. Let us also renew ourselves in the spirit of the interior life, asking Blessed Margaret Mary to

help us. She had so much power in increasing this spirit among her Sisters, and she will do the same for us. There is always a danger that exterior work may weaken the interior spirit. To-morrow, then, let us go before Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and lay our souls before Him, asking Him to touch those weak places where He sees a change is needed. He can, and will, change them if we will but be faithful to penance and prayer. Pray for love of prayer and all that is spiritual; pray for love of humiliations and crosses. We have chosen a life of penance; it was our intention when we entered Religion to lead a life of penance, and now on this great day let us fervently renew our act of immolation to the Sacred Heart in the Blessed Sacrament."

ADVENT

"Advent is a beautiful time for renewing our fervour, our desires, our love. All life is a preparation for Our Lord's coming. In Lent He comes to us in His sufferings, at Easter He comes to us in His risen glory, at Pentecost He sends us the Holy Spirit, at Christmas He comes as our little King. He, too, so often asks us to come to Him. Sometimes when we are in misery and desolation He says to us 'Come,' that He may console us. Sometimes when we feel disheartened and discouraged He says 'Come,' that He may strengthen us. Sometimes when He sees us getting a little too much absorbed in our work, too much engrossed by it, He says, as He said to the Apostles, 'Come aside and rest awhile'; and so He draws us gently back into more quiet and recollection. Very often during Advent we must listen for His call, and prepare ourselves for that last 'Come' with which He will call us home in death. The Church seems to draw our attention to this in the Gospel of the last Sunday after Pentecost, and again in that of the First Sunday of Advent. Both remind us of the last 'Coming' at the end of the world. He is calling us to the Crib now, and we must prepare something to lay before His Feet on Christmas morning. We cannot all decorate the chapel, but we can beautify our hearts and souls with wreaths and garlands of charity and desire. Let us remind ourselves continually: 'Christ is near'; let us frequently say that beautiful aspiration: *Veni, Domine, et noli tardare!*"

CHRISTMAS

“Christmas is the sweetest of all Feasts, blending thoughts of our earthly and heavenly homes. Which home have *we* more ardently desired? O happy we!

“It is the spirit of the Church to make the events which the Feast commemorates present to us, so that we see and take part in all that is happening. Let us journey with Our Lady and St. Joseph to Bethlehem, as their little maid; notice their gentleness, patience, and peace, and beg for grace to imitate them. Invite Our Lady to place her Divine Child in our hearts.

“Note the emblems—dew, the clouds raining down the Just One, the Flower from Jesse’s root, the Prince of Peace—how tender and sweet it all is! Let us turn to the Holy Child on Christmas night, bearing in our hands the flowers of love, pity, compassion, humility, meekness, and gentleness. If there be any coldness in our hearts it must be melted now; for His dear sake we will love one another, and, above all, we will love His blessed poor.”

FERVOUR IN COMMUNITY LIFE

“The spirit of the Church which should be, as it were, our guiding star through Lent, is the spirit of penance. Every thought, word and act of ours should be impregnated with this spirit. *A bundle of myrrh is my Beloved to me*—that should be our device during Lent. And we should treasure that myrrh, taking all the sufferings that come to us as presents from the Hand of Our Lord and Spouse. At Easter He may give us roses and lilies, if He will, but now He offers us myrrh, and we will stretch out our hands for it eagerly. We must enter upon this holy season with much courage, denying ourselves, controlling ourselves, and humbling ourselves. The very best means of doing these three things is by faithfully adhering to the practices of community life, and by living the common life in a cheerful and charitable spirit of penance. Let us ask ourselves from time to time three questions proposed by Father Dignam—

“‘Am I a means of sanctification to my Sisters?’

“‘Am I a source of happiness to them?’

“‘Is my work done for God alone?’

“As regards the first, we know that we ought to advance every day in the knowledge and love of our Blessed Lord. This means that we shall imitate Him, and thus begin to lead the lives of saints—acting up to their maxims, striving to attain their standards of virtuous living, never allowing ourselves to be mean or ungenerous in God’s service. When, in preparing for Holy Communion, we ask our Lord to *sanctify and make us holy*, let us put all possible fervour into our petition, and ask Him for nothing less than to become saints. We must be saintly ourselves if we would help others to be so. We must each bring our personal contribution to the sanctity and fervour of the house. We can all practise this religious *esprit de corps* by our good example, not that we should do things for the sake of edification, but we should remember that those who live with us are inevitably influenced by our actions, and we must realise the heavy responsibility which this places upon us. I have often noticed in myself that when I see a Sister doing something which costs her, or being faithful to some minor recommendation, I at once make a resolution to improve myself in that particular. Let us try in that way to help one another to become saints.

“Then comes the second question. To live together, and not try to make one another happy, would be a very serious thing. Of course each one has her own character, her own angles and corners, and we must all try to fit in with these. Even among the saints there was often need for forbearance one with another. The great thing in religious life is to show great consideration for others in word and act, and not to expect consideration in return. When we awake each morning, after we have given our first thought to God, and have placed ourselves in the Sacred Heart, our second thought might be: ‘What shall I do to-day to make others happy?’

“So too, ‘Am I a means of peace?’ What does this demand but the exercise of tender charity towards others. There are so many, thank God, who are indeed a source of happiness and peace to all around them, who do little kindnesses, who cover defects, who meet others half-way, who show by their very manner that they would do anything to help those with whom they live.

“Lastly comes the all-important question: ‘Am I doing my work for God alone?’ If we are, then our work will not

interfere with our own perfection, or that of others. When we are working solely to please others, to advance our own cause, to do our own will, we are distressed and unhappy when we are thwarted or unsuccessful. We must always fear lest, after having entered Religion to work for God alone, we may take back some of our offering, and spoil our work by some human motive, such as a desire for honour, praise or appreciation. We should offer our work to God frequently during the day, saying, *For the love of Thee, or Fiat voluntas tua.*

“ Pray earnestly that we may be a most fervent Community, and that God will give to each Sister that grace which Our Lord in His Passion suffered particularly to obtain for each of us. Ask that the Community may have the grace of a very great love for Him, the desire to suffer for Him in a spirit of charity. There are some special graces that I wish to obtain for this Community—a supernatural tone—that we aim very high, that we realise that we must all be saints, that we recognise that there can be no easy path for us on the road to sanctity, and that the edge of our tenderness of conscience with regard to vows and rules be ever kept sharp and firm.

“ Remember the words which our Blessed Foundress once addressed to the Sisters at the beginning of Lent: *Vous pouvez toujours sans peur discipliner votre volonté, faire taire votre jugement et opinion, et coucher vos sens sur la dure de la vie commune.* Our work imposes certain limitations on our practice of exterior penance, but we need not limit in the same way our practice of interior mortification.”

IN THE CROSS IS SALVATION

“ I think it is St. Bernard who remarks somewhere that there were three classes of persons who followed Our Lord in His entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday—

1. Those who went before Him, clearing the road, and perhaps more occupied with their work than with Him.
2. Those who followed Him—devout persons, no doubt—but more occupied with the procession than with Him.
3. Those who pressed close to His side, who, once they had seen Him, wanted to be near to Him.

“ Let us begin on Palm Sunday by putting ourselves by Our Lord’s side, and for this we must be ready to make any sacrifice, to share more in His Cross. We each have our crosses. Our interior cross probably no one knows but Our Lord Himself, Who has sent it to us. Our exterior cross may be bodily suffering, difficulty in our work, humiliation or annoyance of various kinds. Let us accept these in a spirit of faith that He is there saying to us : ‘ It is I, fear not.’ When we entered Religion, realising that Our Lord gives crosses as a sign of His love, we were consoled to think that our three vows were the three nails with which we should be fastened to the Cross of Christ. Let us renew ourselves in the thought of that willing self-crucifixion of our profession day.

“ We know that when everything is going smoothly, it is not exactly that Our Lord forgets us, but He is certainly not paying quite as much attention to us as when trials meet us at every turn, and when at every step we seem to walk on burning coals. Then, indeed, He is taking us by the hand to be crucified with Him.

“ Let us bear our cross joyfully, courageously, and silently, and let us keep near to our Mother of Sorrows, treading with her in the footsteps of her Son.

“ We must have an ever-increasing devotion to our crucifix. When we have fought under it all day, we must go back to it at night, and show Our Lord our wounds, asking Him to heal them by the power of His own most precious wounds. Let us salute our crucifix as the soldier salutes his flag.”

THE LIFE OF PRAYER

“ Our Blessed Mère Julie considered that all our success was due to prayer; she thought more of prayer than of anything else, and if we are to be true Sisters of Notre Dame we must value prayer, pray for the gift of prayer, and strive to obtain the spirit of prayer. This does not mean that we must be always meditating, or saying long prayers. For us, prayer consists in increasing more and more in acquiring familiarity with Our Lord; it means closer union with Him each day—thinking of Him, feeling with Him, speaking of Him, and making use of everything that helps to bring us nearer to Him. We must pray especially for the hundreds of souls confided to

us in this great city, so many of whom are surrounded by sin and wickedness of every description, and who see God constantly offended by those with whom they live. Let us pray earnestly to their Guardian Angels to preserve the innocence of our children. These practices continually remind us that we are Religious—Spouses of Our Lord. They set our hearts thinking of Him, longing for Him, and telling Him that we wish for no word but His, for no smile but His, and that we sigh for the time when we shall hear Him call : *Veni, Sponsa !*”

MATER AMABILIS

“The spirit which should animate us during the month of Our Lady should be the threefold spirit of joy, peace, and sweetness.

“*Joy* in Religion is a very holy and beautiful thing; it is the joy we take in all our occupations—the joy of our vocation. We must try from time to time to increase in ourselves our appreciation of our spiritual vocation as Sisters of Notre Dame, for I am sure that Our Lady takes special interest and pleasure in the work of her *own* Sisters. Let us rejoice not only in the success of our work, but also in the failure and disappointment, since all brings us nearer to Him. St. Paul says ‘Again I say, rejoice’; let us then show this holy joy by our demeanour, recalling the words of our Holy Rule which remind us that our countenance should show joy rather than sadness. We should cultivate this spirit of joy not only for our own sake and our own perfection, but because it helps others to be happy too.

“Then there is *Peace*. Our Lord said so often to His Apostles : ‘Peace be with you,’ and He says it to us also, if we would but listen to Him. When others annoy us or thwart our plans, He is quite near us, whispering, *Pax vobiscum*, and He will help us to keep our souls unruffled if we turn immediately to ask His aid. We must pray that we may all have this gift of peace, and we must also strive to banish all trouble from our minds, by trying not to have any disturbing note in our conduct which may annoy others.

“Lastly, we must cultivate *Sweetness*. Think of Our Lady all this month as *Mater Amabilis*; she has many titles; some reveal her greatness and power—*Virgo Potens, Mater Admira-*

bilis, Speculum Justitiæ ; but we will invoke her as our most amiable Mother, and we will make it our special care to honour her by our sweetness and amiability with those around us. There are sometimes little thorns that pierce others, and though we cannot always prevent the pain they inflict, yet by our sweetness and kindness we can always bring some alleviation."

THE EXPECTATION OF OUR LADY

'The Feast of *Our Lady's Expectation* reminds us that we, too, are expecting Our Lord to come to us very soon. *The Lord is nigh* must be ever in our hearts, just as it was in Our dear Lady's. Through all our work let us long for a glimpse of—

"His Human Face and Features
So passing sweet to see."

"We can imagine how the week before the birth of Our Lord all her time was spent in preparing for His coming. She remembered everything, gathered together all the little things He would need, saying to herself all the while : 'The Lord is nigh.'

"Now this is a time when we can think of Our Lady, for we have to settle all our religious and temporal affairs at the end of the year, so that when Our Lord comes He may find everything in order.

"The first of the Great Antiphons, *O Sapientia*, is a very beautiful subject for meditation. The Eternal Wisdom disposes all things *fortiter et suaviter*—with such force and sweetness. Let us resolve, as we meditate, that we really will be strong in resisting temptation, strong in denying ourselves, strong in refusing to follow our own inclinations ; and that we will also be sweet and calm in every word and act. The virtues Our Lord asks us to offer Him at Christmastide are humility, meekness, submissiveness, simplicity and a childlike faith. We are all children when we gather round the Crib."

THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LADY

"The Feast of the Presentation, of Our Lady's consecration of herself in the Temple, is especially the Feast of religious, the commemoration of the consecration of their lives to God's

service. We can tell what the Church thinks of the greatness of this consecration by the fact that she considers Religious Profession as a second Baptism. It shows us, too, the perfection with which the Church assumes that we have made our vows. She takes for granted that our dispositions of immolation in God's service are so fervent—that it is such a holocaust and whole burnt-offering—that everything natural and worldly in us is consumed. Henceforth we live for God, and God alone.

“On a day like this it is a good thing to call to mind the fervour with which we first pronounced our vows. In the spirit of thanksgiving we should recall what we have received, we should realise what a grace was ours to have been allowed to make those vows, and we should strive to appreciate more and more the importance and dignity of our religious vocation.

“It is good therefore that we have days which remind us of what we promised to God. *We* promised great things, it is true, but *He* promised greater things to us. It was not we who chose Him, but ‘He hath chosen us,’ He called us to leave all and follow Him, and our ‘all’—no matter how great it may have been in some cases—was nothing in comparison with what He has given us in making us His spouses.

“We should pray specially for love of our vocation and of our Institute. Our Lord in calling us to be Sisters of Notre Dame has drawn us to a life of self-sacrifice and self-abnegation. We must be ready to renounce our own will and our own tastes, and, if we hope to persevere, we must embrace all opportunities of practising self-renunciation with fervour and gladness. Living in a large Community, we may have little time to ourselves, little privacy. Let us find our privacy with Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Let us take our trials to Him there—the trials of our Institute, our own personal trials. In those beautiful words of Père de la Colombière: *Je ne me trouve point embarrassé de mes liens ; je voudrais, au contraire, les multiplier, ou en serrer le nœud davantage*—let us tell Him we would like to draw those bonds closer still; that we would give Him something more than He asks, rather than complain that He has asked too much.

“Let us excite ourselves to great fervour in making full use of all the opportunities we have of putting our vows into effect. There are some occasions on which we can make ourselves feel the weight of Poverty—to lead, as far as possible, the

common life, to be pleased when we are being inconvenienced or forgotten, to take all that is given to us as an alms, and never as a *right*.

“Renewing our vows is renewing our sacrifice, so we ought to have a great devotion to doing this frequently. When any difficulty in keeping them presents itself, when poverty pinches, when Obedience asks something which costs—let us turn to Our Lord and renew our vows with love and self-sacrifice.”

THE SAINTS AND SANCTITY

“The Feast of All Saints is a day we should spend more or less in Paradise, and our present Paradise is to be in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. It is a day to transport ourselves in spirit to heaven, seeing there the Saints, and among them many we have known and loved upon earth. It is a day for speaking to the Saints, not only to the canonised Saints, but to the Saints of our own Institute—the Saints with whom we have lived. It is a good thing to accustom ourselves to converse with the Saints, to invoke their intercession frequently during the day. If we were more familiar with them we should feel them nearer—I do not mean we should have visions—but we should experience their help in a very marked way.

“We must try, too, to bring home to ourselves that wonderfully beautiful doctrine of the Communion of Saints, remembering that it includes the Souls in Purgatory as well as the faithful on earth. We are sometimes tempted to look on the Souls in Purgatory as if they were in some measure inferior to us, because they depend so much on our prayers. But we must remember that very many of them were called to high degrees of sanctity, that they had very great graces and therefore very great responsibilities, and that they have to expiate the smallest imperfections in a manner not required from those to whom less has been given.

“When we consider the causes of the beatitude and joy of the Saints we must ask ourselves what we have to do to become Saints. We know that Christians in the world are called to be saints, then how much more those who have entered Religion! When Blessed Mère Julie founded our Institute she meant it to be an Order of Saints. We can all

recall many and great graces we have received which would have been sufficient to make saints of us long ago. We must ask ourselves whether we are held back by some cowardly ideas of perfection, low ideals of religious life. In entering Religion we chose the path of perfection, the path to sanctity. Let us not abandon our high ideal on the plea that our active life brings many distractions. These very distractions, inevitable as they may be, need not in any way interfere with our union with God; they may indeed help us on the road to perfection if we use them as a means of mortification in expiation for our sins.

"We must ask St. Teresa to give us the graces which she possessed in such great measure—love of Our Lord and zeal for souls—so that He may be able to say of this house, as He said of one of her convents, that He 'makes it His delight to dwell there.' Her zeal was remarkable when we consider her spirit of contemplative prayer; perhaps it was that her labour for souls was blessed because of her labour for her own perfection. The success of our work depends on the efforts we have made to sanctify ourselves. Let us then, first of all, be zealous for our own perfection, not for selfish motives, but that we may gain more souls for God when we have brought our own souls closer to Him. Blessed Mère Julie and our first Mothers never forgot their own perfection, even in their most laborious work for the salvation of others.

"Let us make a *hobby* of our spiritual life—studying the best methods of prayer, practising mortification, corresponding with grace, seeing God in all the souls with whom we come into contact. So shall we make of this Community a stronghold in the service of God."

ZEAL FOR SOULS

"Our zeal for souls should show itself sometimes in *words*, sometimes in *desires*, sometimes in *acts*.

"Not every Sister of Notre Dame can contribute *directly* to the conversion of souls, but indirectly every one can help.

"It is dreadful to see the wave of infidelity that is passing over the land. Even among Catholics there is a coldness, a tepidity, a want of Faith which to many seems a sad change from the past. We should do all we can to stem the progress of the evil by our prayers, and we should try to make our

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pupils realise from our words what a wonderful treasure they have in the Blessed Sacrament. When people seem cold about their Faith, we must remember that argument is of no avail, that prayer is the sole remedy, and we must gently lead them back to practise it.

"We must pray, too, for an increase of Faith both in ourselves and in others. Probably many careless Catholics owe their happy deaths to the intercession of countless religious who work and pray for the salvation of souls. In our religious instructions let us impress our pupils with a spirit of solid piety; let the foundation of their spiritual edifice be principle and not mere sentiment. Put before them something really practical, which they can carry out in their future lives.

"But we must do more than pray and teach; we must also sacrifice ourselves for souls. Sometimes Sisters desire martyrdom, or are eager to endure the hardships of the Congo or Zambesi mission-fields in order to satisfy their thirst for souls. This is praiseworthy and generous. Yet we must remember that we can sacrifice ourselves *here*; we can renounce many pleasures, we can find opportunities of many little martyrdoms in our daily life. Let us then animate our hearts with the spirit of self-denial and self-immolation, and let us offer up our penances, both interior and exterior, for the salvation of souls.

"We might take for our maxim these eminently true and practical words: 'High aims without hard work is mere poetry and uselessness; hard work without high aims is mere drudgery.' As Sisters of Notre Dame we have to attain high aims by hard work, and this is nothing less than saying that we have to become saints."

THE SPIRIT OF FAITH

"The more we pray for a strong spirit of Faith and the grace to realise the Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament, the Angels who surround us, the reality of God's love for us, the more we shall have grace and power to impart it to others. We, who are the daughters of Blessed Julie who lived and worked for God alone, who saw all things in God, should ask, as an inheritance from her, the grace of looking at the supernatural side of all our work."

THE APOSTOLIC SPIRIT

“We all of us have to labour very hard, and it is most important that we should spiritualise our work. The first way to sanctify it is to remember that we do it for God, and therefore that we must do it supernaturally. Mère Constantine once gave a practice to the Community at Namur—‘think only of God and work only for Him.’ The very next day she met a Sister hurrying across one of the courtyards, and said to her: ‘Sister, what are you doing?’ The Sister answered somewhat excitedly: ‘Oh, ma Mère, I am looking for some plates; some one must have taken them away.’ And Ma Mère smiling gravely said to her: ‘Ah! Sister, is that what we said we would do?’

“If we remember that we are working for God, we shall not feel so keenly any want of appreciation on the part of others; we shall care only for the eye of God, the smile of God, the love of God.

“If we desire to supernaturalise our work, we shall take care to do it in the most perfect manner possible; we shall put our very best intelligence and strength into our work, whether that work be great or small. It does not so much matter what we do, but it matters very much in what way we do it. It has been well said that God looks more to the adverbs than to the verbs.

“As to the spirit in which we do our work, we must make it one of love and affection. St. Paul reminds us that we are not *servants* but *sons*. Such a spirit will lead us to give without counting the cost, to do whatever our hand finds to do, never to murmur at the amount of work that falls to our share, to realise that obedience implies more than the *letter* of the law—that the *intention of the Superior is the end in view*.

“Then, as a Community, we must work harmoniously, taking an interest in the work of every one, and showing that we do so. We can show this interest by our appreciation both of the success of their work, and of the difficulties with which they had to contend. Again, we can show our interest by lending a helping hand or by offering to help. Such help may often be a hindrance, but the one to whom the offer is made should always be grateful for the goodwill of the Sister who

offers, and she should, when possible, accept the *hindering help* as an act of virtue.

“One thing more is required to make our work perfect—it must be done devotedly. Devotedness is best explained by one word—unselfishness. We should always be ready to do any work that has to be done, but especially that which is humble, unpleasant, and disagreeable. There ought to be a holy emulation amongst us for this kind of work.

“If we do our daily task supernaturally, affectionately, harmoniously, and devotedly, we shall not be very far from the Kingdom of God; nearer, perhaps, than we have ever thought ourselves. We are sometimes tempted to complain of the difficulty of keeping ourselves in the Presence of God. Well, in this way our work itself will become the very best exercise of the Presence of God, and we shall experience the truth of the old monastic proverb, *Laborare est orare*.”

GENEROSITY IN GOD'S SERVICE

“We became religious not to have a life of pleasure, not to be honoured and made much of, not to do a great work successfully, but to save our souls and become saints, no matter what the cost. The cost of becoming a saint—in other words, of becoming a perfect Sister of Notre Dame—is boundless generosity in making the sacrifices which God asks of us, so we must

1. Give up all happiness except in God and in His service; we must detach ourselves from all that keeps us from Him, whether it be persons, places or things.
2. Give up all thought of personal advancement or preferment, not looking for success, praise, or reward.
3. Give up personal ease and comfort, putting up with little inconveniences, suffering gladly the deprivation of something necessary, for the love of Holy Poverty.
4. Give up self. A selfish religious is an ugly idea, but we *are* selfish if we make others always give way to us, if we always make their interests subordinate to ours.”

SPIRITUAL IDLENESS

“Religious, as a rule, are not idle. They always have a great deal of work, and they may be sometimes tempted to

think themselves—and even to call themselves—slaves. But we can be, and sometimes are, spiritually idle. We are idle : when we allow ourselves to be discouraged, and think there is ‘no use in trying’; when we are satisfied with mediocrity, and do not aim at sanctity; when we are not actively engaged upon overcoming our faults; when we have no fixed plans for mortifying ourselves both interiorly and exteriorly; when we forget that *self* is the arch-enemy, which has so often played us false.”

THE RISEN CHRIST

“*Pax tecum*—this is Our Lord’s Easter greeting. Let us consider all that is meant by it—how He stills our agitation, calms our worries and anxieties, brings peace with His very Presence.

“Again He says : ‘It is I, fear not.’ He pleads with us to tell Him everything, to trust Him, to have that love for Him which casts out all fear.

“To us, as to St. Peter, He says : ‘Lovest thou Me more than these?’ This reminds us that we must love Him more than those who have not the responsibility of leading others to Him.

“Then we hear His words to St. Thomas : ‘Blessed are they that have not seen but have believed.’ *We* are blind, and at times we can neither see nor understand, but we trust and believe Him, and so to us He says : ‘Blessed are *ye* that have not seen but have believed.’

“There is great beauty, too, in the recorded words of Our Lord’s friends during His Risen Life, and many of them we can profitably appropriate.

“When Magdalen heard His *Mary* on Easter morning she answered, *Rabboni*. That title, *Master*, seems to me the most beautiful of all. He is our Master as Teacher, and our Master as Lord. Martha says : ‘The Master is come and calleth for thee.’ The Apostles say : ‘Master, we have laboured all night, and have caught nothing.’ Evidently they were accustomed to call Him *Master*, and He liked it. Let us call Him ‘*Master*,’ tell Him how many things we need to learn, and ask Him to be our Teacher. Let us tell Him that we want Him to reign over our hearts as sole Sovereign and Lord.

“Then there are the words of the Apostles when they saw

Our Lord standing on the shore : *Dominus est!* How often in the day might we echo these words—when trouble, or anxiety, or worry, overwhelms us; when we have an inspiration to conquer ourselves; when some joy or consolation comes to us. In all that happens we remind ourselves : ‘ It is the Lord.’

“ Next, we may recall that beautiful prayer of the disciples on their way to Emmaus : *Mane nobiscum, Domine, quoniam advesperascit.* Some of us can truly say that our day ‘ is already far spent,’ and all—even the youngest—need to ask Our Lord to stay with us.

“ We all have a particular affection for St. Thomas; there was something so open and frank about him. We may make *his* words, too, our own. We can say : ‘ My Lord and my God ’ as an act of faith, of hope, of charity, of contrition, of humility, of thanksgiving. All these *aspirations* we shall find in the gospels of this week, and we can do nothing better than unite with the friends of Our Lord in repeating them to Him. And, as we may be sure that He had many an interview with Our Lady during those forty days of His Risen Life, let us ask her to intercede for us now that we may have the grace to live holily, so that, after this our exile, she may show unto us the blessed Fruit of her womb—Jesus.”

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CHAPTER XVIII

A SECOND SPRING

"And when the field is fresh and fair
Thy blessed Feet shall glitter there,
And we will walk the weeded field,
And tell the harvest's golden yield."

JOHN MASEFIELD.

TOWARDS the close of the year 1892, Canon Chisholm of Paisley was deputed by His Grace the Archbishop of Glasgow, Dr. Eyre, to call on Sister Mary of St. Philip, and discuss with her the question of founding a Training College in Glasgow. This overture was followed in the spring by a letter from His Grace saying that he intended to move in the matter at once, and that the Sisters of Notre Dame might expect to hear from him in due course. Canon Cameron and Canon (afterwards Archbishop) Mackintosh also visited Mount Pleasant about this time, and strongly urged on the Sisters the necessity of taking immediate action. After careful consideration of the subject, the Reverend Mother-General directed Sister Mary of St. Philip to visit Glasgow for the purpose of choosing a suitable site. In June, 1893, she travelled northward, accompanied by Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid, and Sister Rose of St. Joseph.

She kept a little record, which she sent to her Sisters, so that they might share with her the pleasures of the journey and the visit:

*"Glasgow,
June 12, 1893.*

"Reached St. Enoch's Station at 4 o'clock, Canon Chisholm there to meet us, and several old students. Went to Convent of Mercy, Garnethill. The Archbishop called at 5.30, and took Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid and me in his carriage to the old seminary at Partickhill. The present seminary at Bearsden is a magnificent building by Pugin, erected at a cost of £80,000, paid out of the Archbishop's private fortune.

“ The old seminary consists of two small villas with a spacious wooden chapel built out behind them. Dr. MacFarlane, the parish priest, lives in one of the villas, and the wooden structure is used as a chapel-of-ease for Partick Church. Formerly eighteen students and three professors were housed with difficulty in the two villas. We saw at once that they were quite unsuitable, even temporarily, for our purpose. We found very little ground available, and were told that it would be very expensive to build in this locality. Partickhill and Kelvin-side are west-end suburbs, quite out of the smoke of the city.

“ The kind Archbishop drove us round the neighbourhood. We saw the University, a superb pile of buildings in a perfect situation on a hill with sloping lawns and gardens. Queen Margaret's College is the Women's Hall. It is quite apart from the main buildings, in grounds of its own, adjoining the Botanic Gardens. It is a Day College, affiliated to the University and taught by the same professors. . . . The Lady Principal, Miss Galloway, told us about the organisation and methods followed. She had heard of us from Dr. Hullah, and intends to call at Mount Pleasant on her way to Chicago.”

“ Tuesday, June 13.

“ We begged St. Antony this morning to find us a suitable house. At 9.30, accompanied by Canons Chisholm and Mackintosh, we took the train to Port Glasgow. . . . Father McCarthy¹ met us, and took us over his schools, the mistresses being two of our old students.

“ The next thing was to see ‘ Glenhuntly,’ a small but very picturesque property lately acquired by the Archbishop with the intention of having there a Convent or Training College. It stands on a hill behind the town, and is approached by a winding road through a lovely wood. The view from the terrace is glorious—the broad Clyde below glittering in the sunlight, and the grand outline of the opposite shore. They pointed out Helensburgh, and Cardross where Robert the Bruce died, the woods and hills of Argyllshire, and the ‘ Bens ’ round Loch Lomond.

“ We explored the house, which is large and convenient, and possesses many conservatories. There is, however, hardly

¹ The present Bishop of Galloway.

any level space for garden walks, and part of the estate has been given up for a public park, which is a disadvantage. Father McCarthy seemed very much disappointed when he saw that we doubted the suitability of his lovely 'Glenhuntly' for a Training College.

"We took the train back to Paisley, and Canon Chisholm conducted us to the Convent, where the Faithful Companions gave us a hearty welcome. The Superior was a former pupil of Sister Rose; her Assistant was the sister of our own Sister Mary Emmanuel. We visited St. Mirin's Schools, and then were beguiled into looking at a plot of ground in Paisley, where the indefatigable Canon [Chisholm] wanted the Training College to be.

"We were next taken to Pollokshields, where a carriage was waiting to convey us to Cathkin, via Langside. At Cathkin we inspected a beautiful house standing in its own grounds, which we liked very much, though we decided it was too far from the town to suit our purpose.

"At 8 p.m. our two Canons left us at Garnethill Convent, where we found not only eleven old students, but the Vicar-General, Provost Maguire,¹ and Canon Cameron, awaiting our return. The Provost was going to Skelmorlie next morning to see the Archbishop, and wanted to tell him the result of our expedition. We gave him our objections with regard to 'Glenhuntly,' Paisley, and Cathkin. Though the old seminary was too small we liked the locality. The ideal spot, we explained, seemed to be Kelvinside, which would be quite close to the University, Botanic Gardens, Park, and Museum, as well as within easy distance of the chapel of the old seminary, and two or three good schools for students' practice of teaching. It was 10 p.m. when we had finished the business of a long and very tiring day."

"Wednesday, June 14.

"Left the kind and hospitable Sisters of Garnethill, to keep our Edinburgh appointment with Canon Donlevy. At the station found a deputation of old students, who presented us with a beautiful framed picture. Reached Edinburgh at eleven, and drove to St. Mary's Cathedral. Canon Donlevy

¹ Later, Archbishop of Glasgow.

showed us over the Church and Schools, whence we made our way to St. Catherine's Convent. Reverend Mother and Sister Rose's four sisters gave us a most cordial welcome. In the afternoon, Sister Rose's brother, Mr. Macpherson, took us to St. Margaret's Convent. Such an interesting place, situated in beautiful grounds full of old forest trees. It possesses a very pretty Gothic Chapel. The house itself is charming, with beautiful cloisters and community rooms. The library is exceptionally good. The noviceship reminded me of Bergholt. Mother-Assistant, a sister of Father Leslie, S.J., showed us many interesting things—a portion of a fresco by Fra Angelico, a Spanish Crucifix, and some fine paintings. On returning to St. Catherine's we found some old students waiting for us. ”

“ Thursday, June 15.

“ At 10.30 Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid and I went to St. Mary's to meet the Archbishop of St. Andrews and Edinburgh, who came in from Perth to see us, and welcome us to his diocese. We discussed the question of a Training College with him, after which His Grace left us to return to Perth, and then we drove with Canon Donlevy to see a house in Albany Street, and another at Parsons Green. The latter has a charming situation near Arthur's Seat, Queen's Park, and Holyrood Palace, but too far from the Church.

“ In the afternoon we went to the little Convent at Dalkeith with Reverend Mother, where we found three of Sister Rose's sisters had preceded us. We had a lovely walk in the beautiful grounds of Newbattle Abbey, the property of Lord Lothian. The Sisters have also access to the private grounds of the Duke of Buccleuch, but they think Newbattle the more picturesque. It was a lovely summer evening, and the scene was like fairy-land as we wandered by the banks of the murmuring Esk, under the gigantic beech and sycamore trees, down a wonderful avenue of limes, and along precipitous paths in the wooded and rocky shores of the river. There was perfect solitude—not a human being in sight. The house is partly a portion of the old Abbey and partly modern. The Abbey Church stood on a lawn near it, and the foundations of the buttresses and pillars are shown by borders and circles cut out in the grass.”

"Friday, June 16.

"Set out on another expedition to Glasgow. Met Miss Tarleton, and drove out house-hunting with her in the neighbourhood of Kelvinside. We found two very good houses in Crown Terrace, Dowanhill, just near the old seminary. Dined at Garnethill Convent, and studied the map of Glasgow with Mr. Brand, who promised to inquire about the Crown Terrace houses. Left Glasgow at four o'clock for Edinburgh. Mary Gordon and Aunt Helen¹ called in the evening."

"Saturday June 17.

"Reverend Mother is so sorry we could not see their chapel in its beauty as they are just erecting a beautiful new altar, the gift of Mrs. Drummond Dick. The chapel is Romanesque, and the nuns' stalls are very handsomely carved. Reverend Mother and the Sisters have been so very kind to us, and our farewell was most affectionate. We found Canon Donlevy and a number of friends at the station to see us off. The train stopped at Galashiels, where two old students were waiting for us for a few minutes' talk. Reached Liverpool at four o'clock."

Though no site was fixed upon at this visit, yet the new foundation was definitely accepted, and it was not long before suitable premises were found in the charming twin villas known as "Dowanside," in the neighbourhood of Dowanhill, surrounded by a beautiful garden, and quite near the summit of the hill which is crowned by the Glasgow Observatory.

Sister Mary of St. Philip was again in Glasgow in the following November, accompanied by her cousin, Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid Lescher, daughter of the "Uncle Sidney" of early days.²

The proximity of Dowanside to the University, and its many other advantages, made it in every way suitable for the purpose in view, and no time was lost in making arrangements

¹ Mrs. Gordon of Drimnin and her mother, Mrs. Hoy.

² After spending several years on the College Staff at Liverpool, Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid was sent to Clapham in 1886 as first mistress in the boarding school. In 1892 she was appointed Superior of the Convent at Everton Valley. She was now destined to found the first Convent of Notre Dame and the first Catholic Training College in Scotland.

for the purchase of the property. Archbishop Eyre was anxious that the College should be opened in the following January, but it had not yet been sanctioned by Government. Canons Chisholm and Mackintosh were indefatigable in their attendance in the lobby of the House of Commons, and towards the close of 1893, owing to the influence of the Scottish Members, Sir Henry Craik was able to give the required authorisation.

In August, 1894, Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid and her community of four sisters arrived at Downside. Sister Mary of St. Philip came with them, and stayed for some time, taking the greatest interest in the humble beginning, and aiding all by her wisdom and experience.

She wrote to Liverpool on August 24 :

“ How I wish the Sisters could all be here this lovely evening, sitting under the trees, or wandering about the beautiful grounds. We are surrounded by quite a little forest of trees of so many varieties that it is quite a study to make them all out. The Scotch firs and yew hedges give the place a Scottish character, intensified by the sweet little Scotch roses still in bloom.

“ The house stands at the top of a long, steep, sloping lawn, and there is a broad gravelled terrace along the front. At each side there are avenues and shrubberies and at the bottom of the sloping lawn is a very shady walk near the road. At the sides of the house there are smaller lawns (one a tennis-lawn) and flower borders, and these rise in tiers so as to make three different terraces. The highest terrace is a long, shady walk with summer-houses at each end, and steps leading to the lower terrace. It has such a pretty effect and the walks are so well concealed by the trees that it requires some exploring to find all the ins and outs. There is a very fine conservatory with a vinery attached to it, and fuchsias and passion-flowers are climbing up the inside walls in beautiful profusion. To see the flowers all over the garden you would think you were much farther south than Liverpool.

“ The Archbishop called this afternoon and sat talking a long time—on a cushioned window-seat (like the one at The Cloisters) which goes all round a large bow window. Then he went with us through the house and admired it very much. It is so very tastefully painted and papered, and everything

is so good. The hall has stained glass windows—one of them with this inscription in the glass—

Pax intrantibus,
Salus exeuntibus.

“Margaret Moloney was here on her way to school this morning with a bunch of heather, and there is to be a great gathering of old students—thirty or forty I think—at two to-morrow (Saturday) to read an address and present a fine statue of Our Lady of Victories to the new College. They were determined to have Our Lady of Victories ‘because,’ they said, ‘it was such a victory to get the Sisters to Scotland.’ We ought to thank God and Our Lady for giving us this beautiful place; people say that our getting it was a miracle—nothing like it is to be had in or near Glasgow. Our Lord is not here yet, which makes it lonely, but we have chosen His dwelling-place, and everything will be ready in a few days I hope. Meanwhile we have a seven minutes’ walk to the Partick Church.”

The “great gathering” of Old Students took place on August 25, and was the first red-letter day in the annals of Dowanhill. It was an unqualified success, filling the heart of Sister Mary of St. Philip with consolation and happiness. Her own letter to the Sisters at Mount Pleasant is the best description of the little ceremony: “I was sorry,” she writes on August 26, “not to send you a letter for Sunday, but yesterday was such a busy day; there was no finding a quiet half-hour. In the morning I was seeing about desks and school-furniture with Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid. In the afternoon there was the Old Students’ meeting which lasted from half-past one to nearly five o’clock.

“You cannot think what a delightful gathering it was. It was got up chiefly by Margaret Moloney, Margaret Graham, and Agnes Duffy, to welcome the Sisters to Scotland, to present an address, and to offer a costly statue of Our Lady of Victories (now on its way from Paris) to the new College. It was a most lovely summer afternoon, bright, warm sunshine making the place look its very best. Soon after the half-hour, the old students might have been seen in parties coming up the two

avenues, and gathering together on the lawn. There were fifty-four present, and several others who were out of town for the holidays sent letters and telegrams. Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid and I, with Sister Julie and Sister Aimée, spent some time with the different groups under the trees, and then we took them over the grounds and through the two houses. At last they were all assembled in one of the large rooms—a future lecture-room—on the ground floor, and then three came into the middle: one with the address, and the others carrying great ‘shower’ bouquets of white roses, white carnations, white sweet-peas and white heather. Margaret Moloney read the address, which had been printed by one of the Misses Fagan; it was most touching in its outspoken loyalty and love. Then the bouquets were presented to Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid and to me.

“After this little ceremony, which brought tears to many eyes (though they were soon succeeded by smiles and laughter), we went into another room, where there was wine and cake for the visitors. They went away so happy and so proud of their ‘own Sisters,’ and of the beautiful place. I think I have never seen such an enthusiastic gathering.”

The address presented was as follows:

“ADDRESS PRESENTED TO SISTER SUPERIOR OF THE LIVERPOOL TRAINING COLLEGE, BY THE ‘OLD STUDENTS’ RESIDENT IN AND AROUND GLASGOW, ON THE OPENING OF DOWAN-HILL TRAINING COLLEGE.

“DEAR SISTER SUPERIOR,

“Gathered here to-day to welcome you to Scotland, are a few of the many students, who in years now past, received their early training under your loving care. Many distant ones, unable to join us here to-day, are yet with us in spirit, and we, in their name and our own, give you a hearty welcome to Scotland. For months we have looked forward to the time, when within sound of our University chimes in Glasgow, there should be formed the nucleus of a second University, dedicated to the work of Catholic Education, and which in the name of Our Lady should send out, over the length and breadth of the land, skilled workers for our Catholic schools. The need was urgent. Scottish trained teachers were few, and as Scot-

land holds a high rank among educated nations, the Church recognised the necessity of supplying a long-felt want to enable her Catholic children to compete with their Protestant brethren on equal terms without endangering their faith.

“Many difficulties had to be met, opposition from various quarters had to be overcome, but right has triumphed, and your presence here to-day makes our Scottish Catholic Training College an established fact. Words cannot express the invaluable work done for England during the last thirty-eight years by the Liverpool Training College under your able guidance, and we look forward to the time when in the near future, there will be sent out over Scotland from the Dowanhill Training College, teachers equalling, if not excelling, those sent from our Protestant Universities.

“And now, dear Sister Superior, we, the old students of Liverpool, ask you to accept from us, for the new College, this statue of Our Lady of Victories as a small thanksgiving offering to Our Lady for the victory she has won through you, for the cause of Catholic Education in Scotland. We trust it may be but the first of many such victories, and that in years to come this College may rival its elder sister in Liverpool. Also, we ask you to accept it as a slight token of our undying affection towards our beloved Mistress, an affection which years have strengthened and deepened, as with fuller experience we are able to realise more all we owe to your teaching—teaching which can only be rewarded by the Master in Whose vineyard you labour, and Who will accord to you a reward exceeding great.

“Again thanking you for your numberless acts of kindness to us, we have the honour to remain, dear Sister Superior,

“Your faithful children,

“THE OLD STUDENTS OF LIVERPOOL.”

(Fifty-four present, who all signed their names.)

The statue of Our Lady of Victories, familiar and dear to all students of Dowanhill, stands in the Sodality Chapel, a lasting remembrance of that love of the Mother and her Son which is the bond of union between the students of the sister Colleges of Liverpool and Glasgow.

In 1894, the diocese of Liverpool suffered the loss of its zealous Bishop, Dr. O'Reilly. His successor, Dr. Whiteside,

who was called at the early age of thirty-seven to rule over one of the most important dioceses in England, had been for some time President of St. Joseph's College, Upholland. Sister Mary of St. Philip greatly rejoiced at his appointment, realising that his educational experience would give him an added interest in the work of the Training College.

In the summer of 1895 Mère Aimée de Jésus made a visitation of her English Convents. The year was a memorable one, bringing as it did the fiftieth anniversary of the first arrival of the Sisters of Notre Dame in England. Sister Mary of St. Philip had been seriously ill in the spring, but she was able to pay a visit to Dowanhill in July when she made her retreat. On her return she busied herself in preparing an informal but most interesting history of the various foundations of Notre Dame in Great Britain. The records had been gathered, when possible, from the pioneers of the various convents, and Sister Mary of St. Philip edited them with her inimitable, light touch. The volume was intended for circulation amongst Sisters and pupils only.

The Jubilee Celebrations at Mount Pleasant began with a Requiem Mass for the souls of all the beloved ones who, during the past fifty years, had laboured and gone to their rest. Then there was High Mass and Pontifical Benediction with *Te Deum* in thanksgiving for the graces and blessings of half a century, whilst the blessing of the Holy Father added to the general joy.

Sister Mary of St. Philip cordially welcomed the plan of studies for day schools and boarding schools of Notre Dame, which was issued from the Mother-House about this time. We have already seen how long before, in co-operation with Sister Marie Thérésia, she had encouraged such unification of work in the elementary schools of Liverpool, realising that unity of aim in standard of attainment and in curricula does not—as some erroneously hold—prevent originality and freedom in method.

In May, 1896, Sister Mary of St. Philip was again at Dowanhill. Her visit of the previous year occurred during the summer vacation, but now, for the first time, she saw the College in working order.

She writes to Mount Pleasant shortly after her arrival:

“ We have a thrush singing all day long, and the trees are more beautiful than ever. The variegated sycamores are

lovely, with great spreading leafy branches—one is such a majestic tree that our whole Community—the Mount Pleasant one I mean—could sit under its shade. I hope you will see this place some day. The new building is up to where the roof begins. A beautiful statue of Our Lady Immaculate has just been placed in a niche—the same colour as the stone of the building—a light greyish red.”

A few days later she writes again :

“ On Saturday, the whole afternoon was taken up with Old Students, and a great many more came on Sunday. On that day we had the dear Archbishop for an hour and a half. He walked up the avenue during recreation while we were sitting under the great sycamore tree. The students soon surrounded him, which is just what he likes, and then Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid and I went and chatted with him in the parlour. He gave her an invitation to take the students to his country house at Skelmorlie, a lovely place on Wemyss Bay, about an hour by rail from Glasgow. His Grace said that he would pay all expenses. On Monday we had a visit from Canon Mackintosh, who seems quite recovered from his illness.”

In this same year, 1896, Mr. Allies wrote to Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid :

*“ St. John’s Wood, London, N.W.,
“ Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, 1896.*

“ DEAR SISTER MARY OF ST. WILFRID,

“ I am not able to visit under your guidance, as I could wish, your new College, to see what carries to one of our greatest cities the example and precepts of one whom I reverence as I do Sister Mary of St. Philip. Permit me to ask you as a token of that reverence, to place among the books of your College, this one which I enclose.

“ It is more than forty years since I was honoured by the commission to bear to Namur an invitation to the Reverend Mother of that day to found a Training College at Liverpool. The firstfruits of her acceptance was the bestowal of Sister Mary of St. Philip, then in her noviciate, to be a teacher of that College, from which she has lived to propagate yours. May Our dear Lady Immaculate bless this one, as she blessed that of Liverpool under Sister Mary of St. Philip. If I am not

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able, as I would wish, to bear witness at greater length to the encouragement which her work at Liverpool gave to me during so many years, you will take this little book as an augury, in which I hope that the Blessed Mother Immaculate will do for Scotland what she has done for so many years at Liverpool. The need is as great and the multitude as vast. I love to think that the teaching will be similar; why should not the fruit be as abundant? If the Prince of Converters went forth in the old times from the Clyde to a heathen Erin, will he not remember the vision of Ben Cruachan, and the host of his children who still dwell on the banks of the Clyde?

“ T. W. ALLIES.”

The Community of Mount Pleasant had grave cause for anxiety when, towards the end of the year, their beloved Superior was seriously ill for two months. A severe attack of influenza brought on congestion of the lungs, and, in spite of her splendid constitution, aided by her buoyant nature and strong will, it was some time before she really recovered.

In 1896, the American Hierarchy had asked the Sisters of Notre Dame to undertake a university college for women at Washington. The matter required serious consideration, and Sister Julia, the Provincial of the convents of the Institute in the United States, travelled to Namur to confer with the Mother-General. Sister Mary of St. Philip was naturally much interested in the proposal, and put all the weight of her experience and influence to bear upon it. After grave and prudent deliberation, Mère Aimée decided to accept the responsibility, and Trinity College was opened in 1897.

In America the founding of a University is always due to the enterprise of some individual, society, or group of men of letters. The part played by the State is simply to inspect and report on the methods of teaching. In these reports the various universities are arranged in three categories—A, B, C—according to the importance of their courses of study, the prestige of their professors, and the educational facilities they afford in the matter of libraries, laboratories, art collections, etc. Trinity College in 1919 ranks first among the University Colleges for women in the United States, being the only one in the “ A ” category.

Sister Mary of St. Philip watched the early days of Trinity

College with great interest. She had, of course, no official connection with it, but there was a certain freshness and youthfulness about the American mind which strongly appealed to her. The particular quality is hard to define, perhaps it may best be expressed as a spirit of intellectual adventure, which, in a young nation as in a young child, proceeds from natural curiosity and the desire for personal experience.

On the first of March her only surviving brother, Father Edward Lescher, closed his saintly life at Bayswater by a saintly death. Dr. Butler in a short memoir recalls how "even in his student days at St. Edmund's College, he was known as 'Holy Lescher. It was Ward's time at the College, and Dr. Ward, who was a family friend of the Leschers, used to say: 'Lescher is a very useful man; he has, what we used to call at Oxford, an *enstatic* mind.' He meant that Edward Lescher would never hesitate to raise a question if what was put before him did not convince him at once. Therefore among the men of that first course of Dr. Ward's lectures he was the one to put difficulties, and ask questions, in the process of making the truths or the conclusions his own." ¹

One family trait which coloured his whole priestly life was his love of the poor. An Oblate Father, describing his funeral to Sister Mary of St. Philip said, "It was the mourning of the poor." Another Father, speaking from the pulpit at St. Charles, Bayswater, paid the following tribute to the memory of Father Lescher: "Death has this week crept in, and taken one dear to us all, one who had, for forty years and more, daily offered the Divine Victim at the Altar, and worked among you for your souls' salvation with wonderful zeal. He was tried by long suffering, which he accepted with the gentleness and humility which were his own, as you who loved him knew so well. Such was his love of God that he feared to keep the smallest thing that would displease Him on his soul, and for long years he had recourse to the Precious Blood through confession every night. Thus when death came, it found him ready."

Sister Mary of St. Philip deeply mourned the loss of her beloved brother, but she knew that he had gone to receive the reward of his selfless life.

The Retreat for former students of Mount Pleasant was given

¹ See Father Lescher's tribute to Dr. Ward in *W. G. Ward and the Catholic Revival*, p. 36.

in July, 1897, by Father M. Power, S.J. It was a source of great consolation to Sister Mary of St. Philip, and not less to the good Father, as the following letter will show :

*" St. Francis Xavier's,
" Liverpool,
" 4.8.97.*

" DEAR SISTER SUPERIOR,

" I cannot leave Liverpool without once more expressing my cordial thanks for the great happiness I enjoyed during my first stay in a Convent of Notre Dame.

" It is a memory that will never be effaced, and a grace that ranks amongst the greatest of God's gifts to me. It has done me, I hope, a vast amount of good, and it has proved a most potent antidote against the discouragement that so often assails the heart of a missionary priest. It is such a comfort to enter a magnificent institution like yours, where God is found to be really reigning and active, and not deposed and slighted, as He is in the world. All that I have seen and heard during these three happiest days of my priestly life, has convinced me that God is being served and loved by your Community, and your dear children, as in few other places in this unhappy land.

" The law of Charity, I believe, obliges us to love the just more than sinners—though our joy at the conversion of the latter may be greater than at the perseverance of the former; and the stamp of righteousness and the mark of God's special predilection was never more visible to my eyes than in the souls whom the Divine Mercy has entrusted to your motherly care. May He bless you in this life and the next, not only for the wholesome discipline which you maintain, but most of all for the all-embracing love with which you encompass your spiritual children, and without which they would hardly realise God's love, and so might come to perish. Surely this is your hundredfold and thousandfold, and it bids fair to increase, until you lead a vast array of souls into the presence of the Master, and the full consciousness of His love.

" Ever your grateful servant in Jesus,

" M. A. POWER, S.J."

As the years passed, Sister Superior was obliged to relinquish her work of actual teaching in the College, though both to

students and past students she gave her conferences from time to time, as of old. Points on which she was most emphatic at this period were discipline and self-control. Modern educationists rightly insist on a reasonable and healthy liberty for the child, and they urge upon teachers the duty of giving their pupils scope for self-expression. But only too often liberty becomes licence, and self-expression degenerates into base self-indulgence, because the more difficult practice of self-repression is completely ignored. Sister Superior noted these tendencies, and warned her pupils of them:

“Good lessons are wasted if you have not proper control over your children. Remember that if you cannot manage your children it is because you have not yet learned to manage yourselves, and pray for strength, wisdom, and prudence.

“Learn to accept little failures and humiliations sensibly. Do not give way to discouragement and grumbling, and do not blame others, but begin again bravely, and work till victory crowns your efforts. Grumbling is said to be an Englishman’s privilege, but it takes the cream off our best actions. Besides, when you grumble, you ruin your professional reputation. Tell your friends that your children are hopeless failures, and, though they may sympathise with you outwardly, they will conclude that you are a failure as a teacher.”

Just as she herself had always been in the van of educational progress, so did she insist that her students should advance with the times:

“Do not allow yourselves to become old-fashioned as years go on. Keep in touch with the educational world by means of your College and of books, papers, lectures, and classes. Keep yourselves competent, and cultivate interest in new educational ideas and improvements. Of course, your proficiency in secular work will not make up for laxity in religious instruction, but, if you keep your minds alert and vigorous by your unwearying interest in things educational, your apostolic work ought to gain rather than to suffer. Brightness, freshness, aptness of illustrations, and new methods of presentation are needed quite as much for religious lessons as for lessons in history or literature.”

Her motherly care descended to the smallest details of a teacher's life—dress, food, lodgings, amusements, companions—all are touched upon in her conferences with infinite tact and sympathy.

The following recommendations were made by her towards the end of her life in a conference given to outgoing students :

Be punctual and regular at your post, and, when possible, make provision for enforced absence.

Never let the incivility or misconduct of others have any influence on your own conduct.

Never substitute a secular lesson for a religious lesson during the time appointed for religious instruction.

Do not say your night prayers later than ten o'clock, except on rare occasions.

Do not devote undue time to novel reading.

Prepare the lessons you have to give next day.

Always have some study or hobby on hand.

Never forget your daily Rosary and Holy Mass.

Write such letters as could be read aloud in the market-place.

Always remember that a Priest is sacred, and to be treated differently from other people.

Never distinguish yourself as a woman who is perpetually standing up for her rights. Be *womanly*, not *womanish*.

Write to the Sisters whenever you need help, and always write to me when you change your schools, or if you are going to be married.

If you are forgotten when invitations are sent out for retreats or reunions, do not take offence, but write and accept all the same.

Remember that Confession and Holy Communion are the great acts of your lives.

Remember in the midst of hurry, trouble, and strain that secular work is only *secondary*.

On the sixteenth of March, 1898, Sister Mary of St. Philip suffered another family bereavement in the death of her sister, Monica, in religion Dame Margaret Mary, who had been Prioress of St. Mary's Abbey, East Bergholt, for more than twenty years. Her humility and sweetness had endeared her to all. "This humility," writes one of her community, "specially

shone forth as a bright example when her younger sister was elected Abbess, for she led the way in the practice of loving obedience, and exact docility, always showing a most reverent spirit, and thereby proving how truly she recognised God in her Superior, and how all natural feelings were subdued by supernatural faith and humility. On the day before her death, she attended all her regular duties, and presided at the evening recreation with her usual cheerfulness and sweetness. Next morning she was seized with faintness, and died after only two hours' illness. Showing the greatest calmness and readiness, and being perfectly conscious to the last, she smiled sweetly on the Sisters who knelt around her, and peacefully gave up her soul into the Hands of Him whom she had so faithfully served." The news of her almost sudden death was a great shock to Sister Mary of St. Philip, for she had a very special affection for the gentle, pious Monica, who, from her earliest years, had seemed to be marked in a special manner as one of God's favoured children.

In the same month, Sir Joshua Fitch visited Mount Pleasant on behalf of the University of Cambridge, for the purpose of conferring with Sister Superior about the foundation of a Secondary Training College. It was felt that with the rapid advance in secondary education it was imperative to secure efficient and specially qualified teachers. With Sister Mary of St. Philip, to recognise the need was to seek at once to supply what was requisite. Accompanied by Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid, she went to Namur shortly after, and laid her plans before Mère Aimée, by whom they were approved. With characteristic promptitude she then carried out the necessary preliminaries, and on October 6 of this same year the new department, henceforth known as St. Mary's Hall, was formally opened by Dr. Whiteside. Sister Mary Xavier, who, for many years, had worked so ably and devotedly in the Training College, was appointed Principal.

There was great joy in Our Lady's Training College when, in 1900, on the occasion of his sacerdotal jubilee, Monsignor Carr was raised by the Holy Father to the dignity of Domestic Prelate. Many of the Sisters from the various houses of Notre Dame in Lancashire were at Mount Pleasant for a pleasing ceremony during which an address was read to the new prelate, accompanied by the presentation of his purple

robes of office. The aged priest, who had watched the growth of the tiny mustard seed into a goodly tree, recalled, in a voice charged with emotion, the memories of those early days:

“The good Sisters in the warmth of their hearts have overstated my merits, and I accept what they have said as a proof of their kindness, and of that regard so tender and so generous which they have always shown towards me. To-night, I feel I must speak of the good Sisters and myself, and yet I have the greatest difficulty, for youth and age mingle so that I do not know whether I am young or old. I am carried back to the days when I was ‘Father James,’ when we used to talk every day, and at every meal, of the Sisters who were coming. I scarcely knew what nuns were, for I had not in my life set eyes on three nuns. In those days there were not many convents in England, and few, if any, in this diocese. But we had read Digby’s *Mores Catholici*, published about that time, and we had heard something about them. Those were the days when we thought and spoke about the Middle Ages. With these reminiscences in our mind, and with the Oxford Movement in the air, one’s young imagination was fired, one’s enthusiasm was kindled, and one longed for the day when convents and monasteries should flourish again. When I was at St. Nicholas’s, Copperas Hill, I heard of the nuns who were coming, and the convent that was to be our very own. With what delight I went early to the station, and had cabs ready. I saw them come out of the train, but scarcely dared to speak to them, so unaccustomed was I to their appearance. I rode on the box with the driver, and took them to their house on Islington Flags. These tender memories touch me to the quick; I seem again to feel my own early emotion, and to see their self-sacrifice and zealous labours for the poor little ones of Christ. And, again, I came here on the first day of their possession of this house of Mount Pleasant, and I turn with holy thoughts to the little temporary chapel where, for more than a year, I said Mass every day.

“But I do not intend to give the history of that intercourse with the Sisters, so holy, so edifying, so encouraging to me. It is owing to that daily intercourse with the Sisters of Notre Dame that I became associated with the religious instruction of children. I am carried back to those early days when the

good Sisters took so deep an interest in these instructions. One who showed so loving a sympathy, dear Sister Mary of the Presentation,¹ gave me much encouragement and joy, and contributed by her enthusiasm to the establishment of the system. In this land of ours there would not have been the present marked success in religious teaching if the Sisters of Notre Dame had not taken it up warmly with their accustomed generosity. Therefore, I thank you for the zeal and love with which you have helped to further everything good in the Church of God. Let me continue to have your prayers, and let me offer you my congratulations and loving sympathy in the restoration to health of her whom we rejoice to see here this evening. She is the pride and joy of the Sisters, ever inspiring them with fresh vigour. I look upon dear Sister Mary of St. Philip as a sister, for we have lived and loved together for over forty-four years, and, when this life is done, may we live and love together in heaven, as we have lived and loved together here."

In the autumn of this year, Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid wrote from Dowanhill to Sister Francis Xaveria at Mount Pleasant:

"We had our Religious Teaching examination yesterday, and you and the dear Sisters in Liverpool would have been gratified could you have heard how the Priests spoke both in public and in private about your dear Sister Superior. In his speech to the students, Monsignor Carr said that she was the mother of all the Training Colleges,¹ and he expressed his regret that she was not present. He, and Dr. Richards also, spoke to me about her in the most appreciative and affectionate terms. Monsignor Carr ended by saying: 'Yes, she is always there, and one can always turn to her. She is a tower of strength in herself—prudent and wise beyond many.'"

Monsignor Carr survived Sister Mary of St. Philip for some years. To the close of his long life he remained the faithful father and friend of the Sisters and students of Mount Pleasant.

¹ For some years First Mistress of the High School, Mount Pleasant, and, later, Superior of the Convent of Notre Dame, Birkdale.

² For present-day provision for the training of Catholic Elementary Teachers, see p. 334, Appendix, Note 5.

CHAPTER XIX

SUNSET

"And I see you where you stand
With your life held in your hand
As a Rosary of days.
And your thoughts in calm arrays,
And your innocent prayers are told
On your Rosary of days.
And the young days and the old
With their quiet prayers did meet
When the chaplet was complete."

ALICE MEYNELL.

THE last years of Sister Mary of St. Philip's long life brought her many anxieties both educational and administrative. Secondary Education was the burning question of the day, and whilst she was, as ever, an apostle of progress, she had to safeguard not only common Catholic principles, but also principles which affected the religious life of her Sisters. "You are religious first," she reminds them, "and your spiritual life and duties are of paramount importance." But, their spiritual interests once assured, she left nothing undone to secure proficiency, and to give every facility for those under her to forge ahead in the work to which they had pledged themselves.

To arrange for the Sisters to obtain University Degrees involved a redistribution of staff—never an easy task—but a more difficult problem was the question of increased accommodation. Under Sister Mary of St. Philip's government the institution at Mount Pleasant had developed so rapidly that once more she was faced with the task of erecting a new building and with, what was much more serious, the stress of the consequent financial burden.

The foundation stone of an extensive addition to the College—including dormitories, lecture rooms, class rooms, laboratory and a fine assembly hall—was laid in 1901. A number of zealous and influential friends offered to organise a bazaar in order to help to defray at least part of the heavy debt incurred,



NOTRE DAME, MOUNT PLEASANT, LIVERPOOL.

From a Photograph by P. A. Buchanan & Co., Croydon.



ST. PHILIP'S HALL, MOUNT PLEASANT, LIVERPOOL.

From a Photograph by P. A. Buchanan & Co., Croydon

and though Sister Mary of St. Philip naturally shrank from making such a public appeal, she set aside her personal feelings, realising that religious are the almoners of God.

This year brought its domestic sorrows, too. In the autumn, Sister Ann Joseph was called to the reward of her selfless life. This fervent religious had been trained as a student at Mount Pleasant, and on entering the Institute of Notre Dame, devoted her days to the apostolate of teaching. After her religious profession, she was sent back to Liverpool to take charge of an elementary school in one of the poorest quarters of the city. There, as a true child of Blessed Julie, she gave of her best, never sparing herself, never counting the cost, never refusing sympathy to those who needed it. Her great love of the poor, especially the sinful poor, was the master passion of her life. The wonderful influence she so gently exercised was realised by few till the day she was carried to her last resting place, when a spontaneous public demonstration proved the esteem in which she was held by her faithful poor. One who was present describes the scene :

“The whole route of the funeral procession was lined with poor people. Carriages, to the number of sixty, joined the simple cortège at different points, and two wagonettes filled with children from St. Joseph's School brought up the rear. Thousands of children with heads bowed and hands joined were drawn up on each side of the streets in which are situated the schools of St. Joseph, Bishop Goss's Memorial, Our Lady, St. Bridget and St. Antony, and crowds of poor people had collected in this part of the city. The traffic was stopped, and the roar of the busy streets was hushed for some minutes as the procession passed.

“When the funeral arrived at Crosby the cemetery was thronged with poor people, who waited patiently to take their turn in casting a handful of blessed earth on the coffin, and their prayers and their tears showed how deeply they mourned her, who had been for so many years their trusted friend.”

Within two or three weeks after this, Sister Mary Mildred, who for many years had laboured generously at Mount Pleasant, also passed to her reward. Grief at these domestic losses was further augmented by the sorrow which Sister Mary of St. Philip shared with the whole Institute at the sudden death of Sister Julia, the Provincial Superior of the Convents of Notre

Dame in the United States. Sister Mary of St. Philip had frequently met Sister Julia, and had great admiration for her remarkable executive powers, for her grand qualities of heart, and for her unswerving loyalty to the Mother-House. Both religious had much in common, not merely in those essentials which are the bond of union between all members of the Institute, but also in their breadth of outlook which was partly, perhaps, the result of their long experience of human nature and affairs, and probably, in a greater degree, the result of their natural simplicity and directness, both of aim and means.

In the early months of 1902, Sister Mary of St. Philip again fell a victim to the prevalent influenza, and she was too ill to be present at the Requiem of another of her children, Sister Mary Ursula, who died somewhat suddenly.

An Order in Council issued about this time to the effect that all Secondary Teachers should hold a University Degree, kept Sister Mary of St. Philip busy in correspondence with Sir Joshua Fitch and other well-known educational experts. At her instance, a meeting of heads of Secondary Schools and Colleges was held at Mount Pleasant, in March. Among the various representatives were Father Walshe, for many years devoted chaplain at Mount Pleasant, Father Hayes, S.J., and Father McHale, S.J., of St. Francis Xavier's College, Liverpool, Canon Banks of St. Edward's College, Liverpool, Father Bousfield of St. Bede's College, Manchester, and many others. The Institute was represented by Sister Mary of St. Philip, Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid (Dowanhill), Sister Edburga (Everton Valley), and Sister Mary Xavier. Dr. (now Sir Bertram) Windle presided, and his sound judgment and experience were of great value in the discussion of the ways and means by which the exigencies of the situation might be met.

Shortly after, Sister Mary of St. Philip, accompanied by Sister Mary Xavier, journeyed to London, where she had interviews with His Eminence Cardinal Vaughan and Sir George Kekewich. Her letters to Mount Pleasant during this short visit are vivid, bright, and hopeful, though she was naturally very anxious about coming changes in both Elementary and in Secondary Education.

The Elementary Education Bill of 1902, to which reference has been made in a former chapter, claimed much of her attention. All who came in contact with her at this time were impressed by her wonderful mental alertness and vigour,

though it was gradually being borne in upon her Sisters that her physical strength was waning. Yet her natural vitality constantly reasserted itself, and she was the despair of the Sister infirmarian, who could not persuade her to take the rest she so badly needed. All through the spring, she suffered from severe headaches, and occasionally was forced to absent herself from the Community, but even then she would sit in the library so that all might have access to her.

In May she was able to be about again. One morning, some of the students, seeing her in the garden, quickly surrounded her, chatting gaily as they walked. The sound of their merry voices attracted the attention of some First Year Students who were being examined in reading and recitation by Mr. Cornish, H.M.I., in the recreation room. One of the examinees, glancing up, saw the group approaching; forgetful of time and circumstance, she flew to give Sister Superior entrance. Her example was infectious, the other examinees followed her, and Mr. Cornish, at first bewildered, brought up the rear, succeeding in opening the French window which would not yield to the eager fingers of the students.

At the thoughtful suggestion of Sister Marie des Saints Anges—who so devotedly took up the work for the English houses which had been Sister Mary of St. Francis's task for many years—a novena of Masses was begun at the shrine of Our Lady at Genazzano to obtain the complete cure of Sister Mary of St. Philip. The novena ended on the Feast of her great patron, May 26, and on that day, for the first time for many weeks, she was able to receive Holy Communion in the chapel. But, though there was a decided improvement in her health, it was necessary for her to have change of air and rest, and early in June she started for Teignmouth, accompanied by the ever-faithful Sister Mary Angela, who wrote the following letter from her dictation:

*"Notre Dame,
"Teignmouth.*

"I am sending you a photograph of this place, and must explain it a little. The Convent stands in the midst of trees on a hill four hundred feet above the sea. Our windows look down over the wooded hill, with glades of green here and there looking very lovely when the shadows of sunset are on them. At the foot of the hill, and close to the sea, lies the little town so white and sunny, recalling Italy. Then comes

the sea, often a beautiful blue, studded with tiny white sailing boats. The view is wonderfully beautiful, and we look out very often and say *Que le bon Dieu est bon !*

"There are two buildings. The old house, in which the Redemptorist Fathers lived before they built their monastery, and in which we are now staying, is a nice old-fashioned country residence. The new building is very handsome and solid. There is a lovely picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour over the Altar, and the whole atmosphere of the house is so thoroughly Redemptorist that I think of 'going over' to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour instead of Our Lady of Good Counsel ! I hope Sister Francis Xaveria will not feel this ! !

"The grounds comprise more than ten acres ; there are four fields where hay is being made. The roses are beautiful ; they form arches in the garden, and even creep up the larger trees."

The secretary here writes independently :

"At the top of the hill there is a semicircle of seats, where one can catch a delightful breeze. Sister Superior often sits there, though it is rather a climb to get up so high. She is much better, and is enjoying the beauty of this place. Her one regret is that she cannot have you all with her. She sends you her love and blessing, and is writing a verse of a poem which she says will give you some idea of Teignmouth."

A slip of paper was enclosed, with the following lines pencilled by Sister Mary of St. Philip—

"Overlooking, overhanging Naples and its subject bay
Stands Camaldoli the convent, shaded from the burning ray.
Thou, who to that lofty summit lov'st at summer eve to go,
Tell me, Poet, what thou seest, what thou hearest there below.
Beauty, beauty, perfect beauty, sea and city, hills and air,
Rather blest imaginations than realities of fair."

MONCKTON MILNES.

Then comes the parenthetical note : "Not quite correctly quoted. Read fifty years ago."¹

¹ The original text is as follows—

"Overlooking, overhearing, Naples and her subject bay,
Stands Camaldoli, the convent, shaded from the inclement ray.

Thou, who to that lofty terrace, lov'st on summer eve to go,
Tell me, Poet, what thou seest—what thou hearest, there below !

Beauty, beauty, perfect beauty ! Sea and City, Hills and Air,
Rather blest imaginations than realities of fair."

She was back at Mount Pleasant a fortnight later, and, though she had benefited by the change to some extent, it was evident to all that she was far from well. In spite of accumulation of work and failing health, she still found time to correspond with her old students, as the following letter from Sydney, N.S.W., shows:

“DEAR SISTER MARY OF ST. PHILIP,

“How can I thank you for your wonderful kindness! That you should write to me in the midst of illness completely overwhelms me. I cannot find words in which to thank you.

“The dear familiar writing brought back to me once again the old college days, and, dear Sister Mary of St. Philip, how I loved them! Could I live my life over again, and choose which parts might remain I would have, before all others, the two years at Mount Pleasant—the same dear Sisters, the same old companions, the same old lessons, the same little troubles—the dear, perfect whole.

“I must not weary you with a long letter, as I fear you are not yet quite well.—With great love to you, dearest Sister Mary of St. Philip, and wishing you a long life among your students,

“I am your loving child,

“E. S.”

All through the summer months Sister Superior suffered from severe attacks of headache, and had to submit to be wheeled about in a bath-chair. But, once more, mind triumphed over matter, and in October she was actively engaged in receiving the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Liverpool, who paid an official visit to the College in connection with the forthcoming bazaar. During the same week she welcomed the Reverend Mother Stuart, afterwards Superior-General of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart, who came with two of her Sisters to spend a few days at Mount Pleasant.

The great bazaar which was held in St. George's Hall, Liverpool, in the second week of October, claimed the interest of all sections of the community, and assumed all the importance of a civic function. The Education Authorities gave permission for the closing not only of the Catholic Schools, but also of the Board Schools for the duration of the bazaar.

On the first day, the opening ceremony was performed by

J. E -

the Marquis of Ripon, in introducing whom, the Lord Mayor paid a tribute to the work done at the Convent of Notre Dame, saying the object of that bazaar was a most worthy one. The Training College in Mount Pleasant was undoubtedly one of the best, if not the best, of its kind in the world. When paying a visit to the College the previous week, both he and the Lady Mayoress had been greatly struck with the excellent style in which work was being done and the splendid way in which the Institution was kept. He had known the Convent for twenty-five years, and had watched it grow in influence and usefulness from year to year. The progress of the nation during the past twenty or thirty years had been owing, in a great measure, to education, and if they were to compete with other nations in commerce they must look to it that their young people were well-trained.

In formally declaring the bazaar open, the Marquis of Ripon said he was not connected in any way with Liverpool or Lancashire, but he had been acquainted for a very lengthy period with the institution on whose behalf that bazaar was being held. Many years ago, when he filled the office of President of the Council, he made it his duty to become acquainted with the principal training colleges of the country, and he was able to bear testimony to the great and good work which the College of Notre Dame was doing. The institution was opened in 1856, and from that day to this it had carried on its work steadily, surely, with an ever-expanding tendency, in the most admirable and successful manner. The present buildings had cost, exclusive of the land value, £38,000, and they had sprung up mainly through the generosity of the noble Sisters of Notre Dame, who had devoted themselves with so much zeal, earnestness, and ability to the education of the people of the country in which they dwelt. Sister Mary of St. Philip had conducted the affairs of the College with signal ability and the most perfect and conspicuous success. The College was doing great and admirable work, and, since its inception, 2200 had passed through it to become fully qualified teachers. Another instance of its success was the fact that His Majesty's Inspectors from year to year had reported unanimously in the highest terms of the work done. Further striking testimony to the value of the College was afforded by people who were not Catholics, but who recognised the excellence of the educational methods

adopted. All saw more and more every day that primary education needed supplementing by secondary education. It was one of the greatest requirements of the country, from an educational point of view, that there should be means of passing from primary to secondary schools those children who showed themselves fit to be so advanced. They must all hope that, as time went on, a closer and more intimate connection would be established between their primary and secondary schools. That need had been recognised by the Sisters of Notre Dame, for at the present time they had arrangements for the training of secondary teachers, and pupils of the high school to the extent of two hundred girls. Training Colleges generally provided facilities only for teachers for elementary schools, little or nothing having been done for secondary teachers anywhere. In fact, everywhere they had been neglected, notwithstanding that there was nothing more important than that secondary teachers should be provided. Therefore the friends of the Notre Dame College could rejoice that the Sisters had so well provided for such teachers. He believed he was right in saying that the provision of a centre for the instruction of pupil teachers was first devised and established in the Training College of Notre Dame, which example had been copied far and wide. Furthermore, he understood that the arrangements for boarding pupil teachers were peculiar to Notre Dame College. That meant that, from their earliest days, and from the commencement of their work as teachers, the girls were constantly in contact with that great training institution, and with the Catholic atmosphere, to which they attached so much importance, with the result that they carried with them into the schools which they entered, to a greater extent than would otherwise be the case, that Catholic spirit with which they were inspired by the training they received. Surely, then, they, as Catholics, might think that that was an institution of which they might be most justly proud.

On the second day, Bishop Brindle came from Nottingham to open the bazaar. The "Soldier Bishop" met with an enthusiastic reception, as he appeared upon the platform wearing all his military decorations. His speech was full of the martial spirit which characterised him. He was honoured, he said, by the friendship of Sister Mary of St. Philip, one of the foremost educationists in England. She and the congregation

to which she belonged had been for half a century in England, doing a work, which, if Victoria Crosses were given for civil service, would have earned them a good many in that period. They had established themselves in nearly every great centre of progress and industry in England, and set themselves to work, not only to give elementary education, but, whilst other people were only dreaming or thinking about it, had set themselves to lift primary education into secondary education. In fact, in a great measure, the success which had accrued in secondary education, had been due in the initiative to the Sisters of Notre Dame. Until now, as far as he knew, no Convent of Notre Dame had ever appealed to the public for help in their educational labours. They had not only given their time, energies, and lives to the service of the poor and illiterate, but also given their own means as far as they possibly could, and it was only now, when the strain had become more than they could bear, that the Sisters asked the public to come to their assistance. He wished the bazaar every success.

The third day's proceedings were formally opened by Father Bernard Vaughan, S.J., who, in a speech that has seldom been surpassed for vigorous eloquence, said that Liverpool was a great Catholic Centre and sent forth teachers to all parts of the world. The work carried on by the noble nuns of Notre Dame was one worthy of the support of all who had at heart the Christianising of the nation. At the present time they were passing through a crisis in the educational problem. They had, in fact, arrived at a stage when it was a question whether Christianity should be ostracised, or reduced to a pale and colourless life which would hardly be recognised. The Education Bill, which, he felt sure, would speedily become law, had been in many quarters very ingeniously misrepresented. There had been many attacks upon it, but the bulk of these had been directed against a purely imaginary Bill, and not the statesmanlike measure brought forward by Mr. Balfour. Far from sterilising education, as Lord Rosebery had prognosticated, the Bill would fertilise education, and would bring primary education up to the level of that of other European countries. It would build up the Empire on sound educational lines, and enable the working man to give his children an education full of the greatest possibilities. Under the provisions of the Bill the Board Schools would be improved rather than deteriorated.

Instead of being favoured they would be put on the same footing as Voluntary Schools, and the latter would be given a living wage. It was an impartial measure, and dealt with education on a broad basis. Its effect would be to level up both Board and Voluntary Schools. He urged them to support the measure in its entirety.

Sir Edward Russell, in moving a vote of thanks to Father Vaughan, paid a warm tribute to his Christian patriotism. Those who shared his (Sir Edward's) religious faith, had long admired the institution which was carried on by the Sisters of Notre Dame. They admired the institution for its superiority and its splendid efficiency, and had in several directions attempted to emulate it. It would be ungenerous of any one having the cause of education at heart, to refuse to come forward and yield to the Sisters that tribute of praise which was justly due to them.

Mr. F. Stapleton Bretherton opened the bazaar on the fourth day. Monsignor Carr spoke warmly on behalf of the Sisters and the College. "I am here to-day," he said, "to perform a duty, nay, though I have said a *duty*, it is something perhaps even more—a welcome pleasure. No priest in the diocese, indeed I may say in the country, may be as entitled to speak of the work of the Sisters of Notre Dame as myself. From their first coming to Liverpool, from the very inception of the idea of opening a Training College, until to-day, I have followed their progress with intimate knowledge and ever-growing interest. Indeed I have been associated, however humbly, with them in some of their most precious work. A wonderful work has been done and is being done at Mount Pleasant. In my early days few—very few—of the men and women in our Catholic schools would now be judged competent for their positions. Hence, we of the older generation, look with grateful wonder on the work which the new teachers are doing, at how much they are teaching, and especially at the manner in which they are teaching. They have gone forth from this College with wide learning and skilful aptitude, with high aims and noble aspirations. Not only have they raised the educational standard of our schools, but they have infused into them by their tender, gentle, and refining influence an element elsewhere unknown, a *spirit*, a *tone*, which could spring only from Divine Charity having its source in their

College years. And it is not merely I, or the Clergy, who remark this result. His Majesty's Inspectors—non-Catholics—have in many parts of the country, stated that on their first entrance into a school, they could see at once from the appearance of the school, the general style of it, the reverent confidence, the docile, affectionate, and willing obedience to teachers—that here was a teacher from Liverpool. Besides this, they have raised our Catholic Schools, containing the poorest of the poor, and with the most slender resources, to the level of any elementary schools in the Kingdom.

“You take a great interest—and rightly so—in our missionary and diocesan Colleges. They are doing a grand work, the noblest of all, in preparing students for the great office of the Priesthood. But do we ever realise the missionary work being done here in our Training College? Are there no apostles, with true and zealous apostolic spirit, going forth yearly from Mount Pleasant? Do we not hear every year of bands of eager and devoted ‘handmaids of the Lord,’ half nuns, I might say, going forth thence, who are doing, and have done, from the south of England to the Highlands of Scotland, a noble work for religion, a fruitful work for the Church, a blessed work for souls, a priceless work for the Christian social life of our country?

“The Sisters of Notre Dame have hitherto devoted all their time, their talents, and their substance, to this noble and beneficial work. Surely, it is time that *we*, in the diocese of Liverpool at least, should arise and eagerly play our part now, in the great work of the extension of the College which they have so bravely ventured to undertake. It is no work of needless ornament or luxury. It is no matter of vain ostentation or self-aggrandisement. It is simply necessary to meet the pressing demands of more advanced education, and to secure that our Liverpool College shall not fall behind any College in the world in its adequate provision for every department of science, literature, and art.

“There is a custom—a praiseworthy one—when a rector of a parish, or his assistant, has done a great work for his people, of giving him a testimonial of esteem and gratitude. So far as I know, no diocese of England has thus signified its appreciation of Sister Mary of St. Philip, who has been a means of blessing to them all. Nor has the diocese of Liverpool yet

visibly and directly testified their regard for the exceptionally and conspicuously great work done by her in their midst. Now, at last, the opportunity is before us—we will gladly welcome it—we will do our duty, nobly, generously, and thoroughly. We will give her, in this bazaar, a great and consoling testimonial of our admiration and gratitude for the splendid life-work of good Sister Mary of St. Philip, in training so beautifully those who have to make the children of men worthy sons of God, faithful children of Holy Church, and devoted imitators of the one saving Teacher of all.”

The proceeds of the bazaar amounted to six thousand pounds, and though this sum covered but part of the thirty thousand pounds which was the cost of the new college wing, yet it was a substantial help, and none knew better than Sister Mary of St. Philip how many sacrifices it had entailed on each and all concerned. What she valued even more than the material help is best expressed in her own words of thanks to those who had laboured so strenuously to make the bazaar a success :

“The Sisters have been much encouraged by the sympathy and kindness which have met them on every side; the answer to their appeal has brought to light many hitherto unknown friends, and it has been yet another proof of the loyalty, the generosity, the *esprit de corps*, which exists among the pupils of Notre Dame: *Retribuere dignare, Domine, omnibus nobis bona facientibus, propter nomen tuum vitam æternam.*” There were many who gave generously of their store at this time, but certainly no gift touched Sister Superior more than twelve stamps which were sent direct to her by a poor Irishman from the Bog of Allen.

The following letter came during the week of the bazaar from her old friend, Mrs. Fielden :

“*Centre Vale,*
“*Todmorden.*”

“DEAR SISTER SUPERIOR,

“Herewith I send a cheque for five hundred pounds as a donation to the Building Fund of the Liverpool Training College. . . .

“I have watched with unfailing interest the development of the educational work begun in 1851, and carried on for

upwards of half a century by the Sisters of Notre Dame with such devoted zeal, marked ability, and brilliant success. At a time when methodical teaching and good discipline were practically unrecognised in Elementary Schools, I noted the introduction of both in those taught by the Sisters, and, as an ardent educationist in her eighty-third year, I desire to bear my testimony to the enormous and widely circulated benefits thus conferred upon the rising generation. With sincere augury of future and continued prosperity to the Sisters,

“Yours faithfully,

“S. A. FIELDEN.”

The generous donor was unable to be present at the formal opening of the new building, but in March, 1904, she came to Mount Pleasant, when the students presented her with an address, and sang some verses written for the occasion. How deeply Mrs. Fielden was touched by the little ceremony may be seen in a letter which she sent from Eastbourne to Sister Mary of St. Philip a week later :

“The poem and the address have been exhibited over and over to my people, with repeated admiration and praise, and I cannot record the number of times I have had to relate my progress round the new wing of the dear old Convent. I did not express at all fully the admiration I felt for the beautiful rooms, class rooms, and the dormitory. They all looked as pure and fresh as if just out of the hands of the makers and decorators—their perfect simplicity and adaptability seemed to me to illustrate, in a measure, the pure and holy lives of my dear Nuns; and the wood so beautifully worked and joined together reminded me of much that often suggested itself to my mind!—not as reverent as due—to admit! The corridors are slippery, but you don’t seem to tumble, the stairs are steep, but to climb nearer heaven, is the normal—Nun-y state, so comes easier to you all than to my butler (Laskey), who confided to my maid, that ‘Missis was such a weight that he didn’t think he could wait at dinner at A. Thompson’s, had it not been for the good tea the Convent ladies gave him!’ It was as good, as unexpected!

“Pray accept yourself, and convey to the Sisterhood my *very* grateful appreciation of *all* the kindnesses shown to me,

Please tell the students that (though undeserving) I *loved* the reception they accorded me, and shall never forget it, but consider it a *climax of pleasure* to my life as a teacher. Tell them, I ask the best blessings on their work, and that mine, though clouded by a sense of frequent failure, has been the surest happiness in a long lifetime.

“With love, I remain, dear Sister Superior,

“Yours affectionately,

“S. J. FIELDEN.”

To an old friend who sent a handsome donation Sister Superior writes:

“How can I thank you for your most generous and unexpected gift, and for the few treasured words with the old ring of sympathy which time and years make more pathetic and precious as we stand on the edge of the Eternal Shore?

“Few have had the blessing of so faithful and indulgent a friend for so long a time as I have had you. When we meet in heaven we shall have much to say, and, no doubt, much to wonder at—even at the way in which earth’s puzzles worked themselves out for God’s greater glory. Meantime I trust much to your prayers, and you can depend on the unworthy ones of

“Yours gratefully and devotedly in Christ.”

All through the latter months of 1902 Sister Mary of St. Philip was busy interviewing inspectors or others interested in education. In turning over the pages of her old diaries, the entries in which were generally condensed into a single sentence or phrase, one is astonished at the amount of work she managed to cover in a single day. She is present at lectures given by some extern professor; or she presides at one or other of the entertainments given by the pupils of different departments of the institution; or she is giving of her wealth of experience to nuns of other Orders who are about to found Training Colleges in India and in Ireland; or she is taking her dear students over the as-yet-unfinished new building, reminding herself and them of the tears shed by the first students of long ago when they had to vacate the old inconvenient rooms for others new and commodious. And always and everywhere

there is the same enthusiasm, the same buoyancy of mind, even when the physical powers seem well-nigh exhausted.

In December, after much prudent deliberation, Dr. Whiteside gave formal permission for students from Mount Pleasant to attend University College for the purpose of obtaining the Victoria University Degree. Sister Mary of St. Philip was now free to enter into negotiations with the University authorities concerning the question of the affiliation of the College with the University. In February, 1903, Professors Carey and Woodward of Liverpool, with Professors Tout and Hughes of Manchester, visited Mount Pleasant in connection with this question, with the result that in the following month a letter was received by Sister Mary of St. Philip from the Victoria University, Manchester, granting associateship to the Training College, and expressing warm approbation of the educational arrangements and facilities of the house.¹

The new Education Act became operative in June, and there were many anxious forebodings as to its effects. On the tenth, Sister Mary of St. Philip called upon Sisters and pupils to begin a novena, ending on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, that the educational changes might contribute to the greater glory of God and the good of His Church.

Another link with the past was broken about this time by the death of the lifelong friend of Sister Mary of St. Philip and of the College—Mr. Allies—whose memory will ever be held in benediction at Mount Pleasant.

Many distinguished visitors, assembled in Liverpool for the Catholic Truth Society Conference, visited the College in the early days of July—His Eminence Cardinal Logue, the Bishops of Liverpool, and Hexham and Newcastle, Monsignor Sabelli, Abbot (now Cardinal) Gasquet, and many others. Though the students were writing examination papers all that week, they found time to give a very successful concert, under the baton of Mr. Goossens, in St. George's Hall, in aid of the Catholic Truth Society.

Sister Mary of St. Philip's loyalty and public spirit were among her most admirable traits. Just as she had given them direct expression at the time of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, and at the deferring of the Coronation of King Edward, by telegrams of congratulation or condolence, so now, when the whole

¹ See Chapter IX. p. 138.

Catholic world was in anxiety owing to the serious illness of the Holy Father, we find her telegraphing to Cardinal Rampolla an assurance of the prayers of all at Mount Pleasant. And, needless to say, the suffrages of the Community and of the students and children, followed the venerable Pontiff beyond the grave.

In the summer vacation, the Old Students' retreat was again given by Father M. Power, S.J. Like that of 1897, it was a great success in every way, and produced very special fruits. Those who know Father Power will not need to be told of the devotedness and whole-heartedness he brought to his task. He was as deeply impressed as before both by Sister Superior herself, and by the fruits of her labours as seen in the souls of others.

Writing shortly after to one who had made this retreat, Sister Mary of St. Philip said: "Father Power has written to me twice since his retreat saying that he will never forget it as long as he lives. I trust *he* will live to give many another, but I feel as if *I* ought to be ready to sing *Nunc dimittis* after that."

These words were indeed, almost prophetic, for when her Old Students next assembled for a retreat, the voice they loved to hear as she welcomed her children home was stilled for ever in death.

Accompanied by Sister Rose of St. Joseph she went to Skelmorlie in September, where for a few days she enjoyed the breezes of the Clyde estuary, and the glories of hills and moors. Rough pencil sketches sent to her dear ones at Mount Pleasant show how lovingly she lingered—as of old—on beautiful scenery. Age with her brought no satiety; her sense of admiration at God's gifts "in widest commonalty spread," remained ardent to the end. This was not her first visit to "Lincluden," for, in 1901, she and Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid had occasion to spend some hours there at the request of Archbishop Eyre. When that great and good prelate died in February 1902, he bequeathed his charming country house to the Sisters of Dowanhill, in whose grateful hearts the memory of his kindness and generosity is for ever enshrined.

Sister Mary of St. Philip was in Glasgow on the twelfth of September when, to their great delight and her own evident consolation, the students of Dowanhill, joined by many past

students of Liverpool, read her an address, which was followed by a concert. The recreation hall, bright with a profusion of scarlet poppies and golden wheat, was made still more bright by the love that shone in the eyes of all, as the venerable religious entered the room. Some of her old children noted that she was less active and buoyant, but when, at the close of the music, she spoke in her inimitable way of her love for Downhill, and of the strong bonds which must ever unite it with Mount Pleasant, her enthusiasm and appreciation left the final impression that Time had gently stayed his hand.

There were many anxieties to be faced during the remaining months of 1908. The transfer of the Elementary Schools to the Local Authority created problems which were difficult to solve, not merely because there were no precedents to serve as guide, but also because any solutions now accepted would probably become precedents for the future. It took all Sister Mary of St. Philip's wisdom and experience to meet the various situations that arose, and, hopeful and courageous as she ever was, there is no doubt that at this time she was gravely concerned at the outlook for our schools. She made brave efforts to bear up under the strain, but repeated attacks of influenza left her physically weaker.

A great sorrow came to her in May, 1904, when her youngest and only surviving sister, Agnes, died at St. Mary's Abbey, East Bergholt, where she had been Abbess for fifteen years. In the obituary notice which was sent from the monastery we read :

"In 1888 Lady Mary Gertrude Lescher succeeded Lady Woollett as Abbess, and under her firm but gentle sway the best traditions of the Benedictine Order have been upheld and enforced. . . .

"In Lady Mary Gertrude was realised the type of a princely Benedictine Abbess of the olden time. Her hands were ever open to the needy, and stretched out to the poor, while her noble mind and large-heartedness rendered it impossible for her to refuse help either spiritual or temporal to those who sought it."

When Agnes Lescher, at the early age of nineteen years, entered the noviciate at Winchester, the saintly Bishop Grant wrote of her to the Abbess : "I am now sending you a subject who will one day prove to be a good Superior." This, like so many others of his predictions, was fully realised.

Shortly before her death a distressing appeal for money was made to the Convent. The administrator suggested to the Abbess that a sovereign would be a suitable sum to send, but she, ill as she was, said eagerly, "Can you not make it two?"

The pupils of the High School were about to give an entertainment in honour of St. Philip's Day when the sad news arrived from East Bergholt, but Sister Superior, with characteristic selflessness, refused to allow it to be postponed, not wishing her personal grief to interfere with the children's pleasure.

At the annual meeting of Headmasters of Catholic Colleges, held at The Oratory, Birmingham, in this same month, a paper contributed by Sister Mary of St. Philip, and another by Sister Mary Xavier were read. History repeats itself, and the teacher is always with us, so that we think we need offer no apology to our readers if we quote the first paper *in extenso*—the writer had just entered upon her eightieth year:

THE TRAINING OF TEACHERS

BY THE SUPERIORESS OF MOUNT PLEASANT CONVENT,
LIVERPOOL

Some years ago, it would have been necessary to give reasons for belief in the importance of a systematic course of preparation for the professional work of a teacher. Many persons thought, not so long ago, that a teacher, like a poet, was "born, not made." Doubtless there have always been what are called "born teachers," who have gifts that no art or training can bestow. So again there are those whom no amount of training can ever enable to bring their minds successfully to bear on the minds of others. But between these two extremes there is an immense middle class, who are capable of learning how to teach, and whose capacity may indubitably be improved by a good, wholesome, and sound process of training. This has, for some time past, been allowed to be desirable for the elementary teacher; but our secondary schools, as well as our great public institutions, have been content, up to a recent date, with securing a master with a brilliant degree, not realising that a clever professor may have a vast stock of knowledge, and be utterly deficient in the power of imparting it. "How different," as Thring says, "is knowing, from being able to make

others know." The teaching diplomas now offered by the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge prove that the need of training for secondary, as well as for primary, teachers, is beginning to be felt. It is recognised that it takes a master, not an apprentice, to make instruction simple, and that whereas any tutor with knowledge can pour it into a clever boy, it needs a skilled (*i. e.* trained) teacher to instruct a stupid one.

My experience has been chiefly concerned with elementary teachers, and with the direction of a residential Training College. Day Colleges attached to Universities are a recent invention, intended to provide for those who cannot find room in the older institutions, or who wish to follow University courses; making actual training in teaching merely a secondary consideration. For obvious reasons these institutions are not likely to meet with much encouragement from Catholics, and it can scarcely be doubted that it is to the residential Colleges we must look, to carry out any thorough, genuine system of training teachers for Elementary Schools. It is within their walls that the character, conduct, taste, and manners of the students are formed, that they partake in a corporate life, and acquire, with an *esprit de corps*, that loyalty and fidelity to the traditions of their *Alma Mater*, which is their heritage through life. It is in such an institution, with its resident Staff, its Chapel, its Chaplain, and its religious atmosphere, that the future teachers of our Catholic children learn the power of self-discipline, and the art of disciplining those under them. Our residential Catholic Training Colleges are the key of the whole educational situation, the central fortress, which should be held firm and strong, for the thorough Catholic Education of our Catholic teachers. No Local Authority should be allowed to interfere with them, no Day College or Hostel can replace them.

As a rule, up to the present time, Students have entered College as King's Scholars, very imperfectly prepared, so that the work of education and training has had to be carried on concurrently. The ideal plan would be to train teachers who are already educated, and this has been attempted successfully in institutions for the training of secondary teachers. The new regulations for the studies of Pupil Teachers, and the higher examinations, such as London Matriculation, etc., which these are beginning to pass, will, by degrees, bring into the Primary Colleges a more highly educated class. Meantime

the subjects of the Government syllabus are treated, as far as possible, pedagogically, and a considerable amount of time is devoted to the theory and practice of Teaching, the *sine qua non* of real training.

A person who is "trained to teach" is one who has passed, under competent direction, through a course of study of the principles of education, combined with practice, under competent supervision, in the art of teaching. Theory and practice, science and art are alike essential.

The theory of Education consists mainly in the study of child-nature, of child-life, and the science of mind, in order to apply the laws and principles thus discovered to the art and practice of teaching. Professor Adams in his *Psychology Applied to Teaching* puts the case familiarly thus: "In former times, if John had a Latin master, it was thought enough for the master to know Latin; in these days, besides knowing Latin, the master must know John, and the knowledge of John goes by the formidable name of Psychology." This rather mysterious science has awakened some needless alarm; but the application of the phenomena observed in children's minds to the subjects taught in the schoolroom, presents no danger in the hands of a skilled and careful expositor. Psychology, as taught in an Elementary Training College, is no more than an intelligent study of the child's mind at the different stages of child-life. It is unquestionably useful to the future teacher, to know something of the sequence and operation of the various mental faculties. He ought to be conversant with the best methods of training the senses during the age of sense-impressions; and with the application of sensation and perception in Kindergarten teaching, Object Lessons, and Nature Study. Again, when the second period of child-life is reached—the age of the representative faculties—the teacher who has studied these mental operations has recourse to poetry and fiction, geography and history, for the training of memory and imagination. The third stage, the maturer age of reason and choice, calls for analytic and synthetic teaching, inductive and deductive methods. All through these stages, in a Catholic College, there runs a strong undercurrent of the Religious element, on which depends the most important of the teacher's work, the training of the will, and the formation of habits and character.

If technical training is needed for secular subjects, it is still more necessary for religious teaching. There is no department, no portion of the difficult task entrusted to a teacher, which calls for more thoughtful preparation and careful training, than the power of giving religious instruction aright to little children. A distinguished clergyman is reported to have said lately at a public meeting: "I confess I have often marvelled, as I stood by, enviously watching and listening to some young schoolmistresses, carefully trained, and fresh perhaps from College, giving a simple religious lesson in an Infants' School. We clergy must often have felt how inadequately we could give such lessons, compared with the ease with which a skilled teacher is able to reach the minds of her pupils, and to interest her class." It is of supreme importance, therefore, that training in the method of giving religious instruction should keep pace and go hand in hand with training in the teaching of secular subjects. What is done for the one, can easily be brought to bear on the other. There must be the same study of the child's mind at its different stages, the same careful adaptation of the subject-matter to the capacity and needs of the class, the same methodical preparation. One difference there is, viz., that the Catechism Lesson is not a mere lesson—it is the centre, the heart, the life-blood, so to speak, of all the rest. It follows both teacher and children through every hour of the day, and gives its colour to every thought that passes through their minds, to every word they speak, to every act they do. This is the part of our Religious Teaching, "with which the stranger intermeddleth not," and which no Local Authority will ever be able to understand.

An essential part of every Training College is a good Practising School. Where possible, a Model School is desirable as well. Just as every efficient Medical School has its hospital, where the education of a medical man is completed under his professors, by clinical lectures and bedside practice, so does every trained teacher learn the art of teaching in a Practising School. Here he listens to 'Model Lessons' from his master of method, he tries his 'prentice hand' under the eye of his tutor, his errors are noted and corrected, and in the weekly 'Criticism Lesson' he is criticised by his fellow-students and by the members of the college staff. When effectively worked, the Criticism Lesson is quite the most valuable of the teaching

exercises, furnishing in a telling way an illustration of the important interaction of theory and practice. To be really fruitful the proposed lesson should be thoroughly prepared by all who are to listen to it, and even tried by them on a class, thus supplying an experience by which to gauge the efficiency of the methods used. All faults of method should be referred to the principles violated, and suggestions required for their amendment. The listeners should be imbued with the true spirit of criticism, not exclusive fault-finding, but a just estimate of the lesson, its merits as well as its defects, its telling points, the fulfilment of its aim, etc. The students may be called upon to discuss points suggested by the lesson; whatever will lend vitality to the exercise should be utilised, for, if not carried out intelligently, criticism can degenerate into a stereotyped mechanical exercise.

The model lesson is another means of helping the inexperienced teacher. It becomes most valuable when it illustrates some special difficulty which students are encountering during their actual practice in the schools. They should feel the need of it, and be prepared to try to copy the model set before them, when they are treating the same subject in their own classes. At the beginning of the term, or when some fresh subject is introduced, such as Nature Study, Elementary Science, Composition, etc., Model Lessons illustrating the general method to be followed are useful before the students have taught the subjects named.

It is needless to say that practical work in school is mere waste of time unless supervised, criticised, and even supplemented, by the teacher of method. The Liverpool College was the first to make use of a number of schools in addition to the regular Practising School, both for teaching practice and visits of observation. The students have thus gained experience in Mixed Schools, Boys Schools, Secondary Schools, and Pupil Teachers Centres.

Some changes which have been introduced during the last five years by the Board of Education, Whitehall, and others now in prospect, have, in some degree, brought additional vigour and life into the ordinary college routine. The students no longer consist entirely of ex-Pupil Teachers brought up in elementary schools. The secondary schools are sending in a contingent, which will be much increased when the new

regulations for the Secondary Education of intending Pupil Teachers are in force. There is now a section of the students following University courses and reading for degrees. This mixture and variety of classes amongst the students, and the interest created in higher studies, have tended to widen the intellectual horizon of both teachers and learners, and to break down the barriers separating primary from secondary teaching. As H.M. Inspector, Mr. Rankine, wrote in his very complete report on the Training College system, in the Blue Book: "Were Elementary and Higher Education joined together as one organic whole, both would be strengthened by the union. All teachers need training, and a complete training ought to embrace both secondary and elementary work: secondary teachers might profit greatly by studying the ground-work of all teaching, and elementary teachers would gain by association with a wider and more liberal culture.

S. M. P.

On June 18, her old friend Monsignor Nugent wrote to her:

"You may expect me on the 27th. When in Rome I made a *find*—the life of St. Philip in pictures. Years ago I had seen this series, but thought, as it was out of print, it would be impossible to get it. However, I have it now, forty-five pictures, with all the other prints that have been issued, of St. Philip.

"Now I am going to present it to you, and would suggest that the series be set up in some room. When God has called you to your reward it will be some little memorial of what the Training College owes to St. Philip. His sweet influence and spirit called you to the religious life, and inspired you to the action of self-sacrifice which has marked your work for God and the country. No one is more sensible of all that you have done here in Liverpool, single-handed, with so little help, and so many blocks put in the way; I feel sure that I could not offer you a more suitable expression of my appreciation."

CHAPTER XX

THE SECOND CALL OF CHRIST

“Rise, clasp my hand, and come.”—FRANCIS THOMPSON.

THERE are two magnetisms which in man or woman—especially in woman—irresistibly attract and subdue; the one is natural—we call it charm, the other supernatural—we name it holiness. Should the two meet in one personality, it becomes unique, eminently a great figure in life.

Sister Mary of St. Philip possessed both these things, and it is clothed in the grace of the one and the power of the other that we have essayed to present her. Yet, in different ways, each of these qualities escapes the touch of the biographer. Charm is so compact of many things, is so subtle, so elusive, that one can no more fix it on paper than one could fix the play of chequered light upon the grass; it must be caught living, or it runs the risk of not being caught at all. And for sanctity, its inner shrine is too close-locked and too sacred for one to do more than peer into it through chance crevices.

Sister Mary of St. Philip's charm remained to the end. The winter of old age seemed never to have touched her; the brightness and the seriousness, the humour and the pathos, the sweetness and the strength, the sympathy and the firmness, which had characterised her in the springtide of her youth and the summer of her maturity, seemed but to mellow more and more in the long autumn of her last years.

Sister Francis Xaveria, who had lived long in religion with her, wrote of this time:

“Sister Superior was visibly drawing nearer to God during her last year on earth. Formerly, whilst waiting for the morning post, she would busy herself with unanswered letters of the previous day, or send for Sisters on business matters, but now, though she still sat at her desk in the old way, there was a reverent, rapt look on her face, which showed that she was communing with God.

“ A Convent of the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration was opened in Liverpool this year, and hearing that subscribers were wanted who would promise to furnish candles for the altar on certain days, Sister Superior put down her name for May 26, the Feast of St. Philip. I told her how pleased I was she had done this, and she answered : ‘ Well, dear, I leave you to see after it, so do not forget.’ Of course I promised with pleasure, little dreaming of the loss that was so soon to be ours, but I sometimes think that *she* knew.”

In July, 1904, Sister Mary of St. Philip was hastily summoned to Glasgow where Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid lay dangerously ill. The Community retreat was in progress, and Sister Mary of St. Philip's presence was not only a joy to the invalid but a source of confidence and strength to the Sisters. Happily, after the administration of the Last Sacraments, a change for the better in Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid's condition took place, and Sister Mary of St. Philip was able to leave Glasgow.

Early on the morning of the day of her departure she sent for one of the Dowanhill College mistresses, and questioned her closely about the courses arranged by the Sisters in the different branches of study. The Scottish Education Department, with characteristic wisdom and enterprise, had recently abolished the system of extramural examinations for students in Training Colleges; and, whilst reserving to itself the power of approval or veto, and the exercise of a friendly supervision, allowed each training centre to draw up its own curricula, and examine its own students. Such an educational advance appealed strongly to the progressive mind of Sister Mary of St. Philip; she saw the record books kept by each mistress, specimens of examination questions, and schemes of study. So interested was she in every detail that she asked to look over the score of an *Ave Maria* by Palestrina, which had been included in the programme of a concert given by the students some months before. Her enthusiasm was infectious, and her delicate appreciation of the efforts of others an object-lesson in humility.

As usual whenever she was in Glasgow, her old children heard of her presence and, though the majority were on their holidays, a little band assembled at the railway station to see her start on her homeward journey. In spite of her protests they insisted on changing her third-class ticket into one for the first-class, and, little as she liked it, she graciously accepted their kindness and

charity. It was their last sight of their beloved mother and friend, for she never returned to Scotland.

Business connected with the Training College took her to London in August. She writes from Clapham to Sister Mary of St. Joseph:

"I have so many letters to write that I am afraid I have not time to send you an interesting one to-day. Yesterday was really very enjoyable. Mr. Hunnybun¹ will settle everything with the Duke. The Cathedral is just opposite his office, so of course we went in. I asked a lady who was saying her beads where the Blessed Sacrament was reserved, and she looked up at me, with tears in her eyes, saying, 'Don't you know me?' It was A. B., a widow now! She was offering her rosary to obtain a good school, when, at the second decade, she saw me. She took us round the side chapels—only three are finished, but these are exquisite with marbles and mosaics, that of the English Saints like the gate of heaven!

"At the Board of Education all the officials were most courteous. Mr. B.—such a nice man—reminded me of Mr. Sadler; he was very satisfactory, and seemed to wish to make things as easy as possible.

"At Hammersmith Mother O'Flaherty and Mother Stuart from Roehampton could not do enough to welcome us. The old Seminary which they have bought is a place to dream of, and die for. Such cloisters! And such a quadrangle! It must have cost Cardinal Manning many thousands to build. We discussed many things, and decided on asking the Catholic Truth Society to print separately the chapters of *Isaías* set in Scheme 1. A good many copies would be required by Wandsworth, Salford, Southampton and ourselves. Remind me about this."

Mgr. Heylen, Bishop of Namur, accompanied by Canon Rousseaux, for many years Chaplain of the Mother-House at Namur, paid his long-deferred visit to some of the English Convents of Notre Dame in the autumn. He arrived at Liverpool on September 7, and consoled the Community by his account of the progress of the preliminaries for the beatification

¹ Mr. Hunnybun was for many years Secretary to the Catholic Poor School Committee.

of their holy Foundress. Though Sister Mary of St. Philip did not live to see the cause carried to a successful issue, she was unwearying in her efforts to bring it about. A few years before, in collaboration with Sister Mary Xavier, she had written the life of her whom the Church now acclaims as *Blessed*, and she seemed to be steeped in her spirit and influence.

About this time she writes to one of her old students :

“ Thank you for your sweet letter—and for the order, which I was half sorry to see. I prefer giving to receiving, and should like to send you ten times that amount. But you are *a dear*, all the same, to send me your firstfruits. May our dear Lord repay you a hundredfold. . . . I am pleased you are attending a French class. Next Easter, when you come for the retreat, what long talks we shall have ! You *must* come. I shall save up money to bring you. Sister N. is praying for you, dear, and so am I. Write to me now and then, and tell me all your woes. May the sweet Heart of Jesus bless and console you.”

To another who announces a visit to the Alma Mater :

“ We shall be delighted to see you next week. I do hope you will enjoy being a student again, and that you will find everything ‘ just the same ’—at least the love will be.”

When the College re-opened in September Sister Superior seemed tired and exhausted. She suffered greatly from thirst and headache, but she was always so bright and cheerful that few realised how ill she was.

A page in her diary at this time bears the significant entry :

“ There's life alone in duty done,
And rest alone in striving.”

Then come the words which had been the sunshine of her declining years : *Solutio omnium difficultatum Christus*. She was nearing her long journey's end.

The celebration of the jubilee of the definition of the Immaculate Conception was the constant theme of her exhortations to the Community at this time :

“ Many of us have gained our jubilee,” she said towards the end of October, “ and we feel it has told on our lives. We must now correspond with this great grace, and recall it frequently.

Let us constantly renew it by gaining other indulgences, and so increase daily in fervour. We all felt as if we were ready for heaven after our jubilee Confession and Communion; we felt as if our contrition were perfect, our accusation and purpose of amendment all that could be desired, and that, if Jesus Christ had allowed us to die, we should have had no purgatory. We should strive to keep in that state always—feeling we have done all purely for the love of God and that we are ready to meet Him when He calls. Therefore, let us try to do all things perfectly, to avoid not only venial sins, but also the smallest imperfections, so as not to lose the love of Jesus. . . . To *aim* at perfection is the essence of the religious life. The essence consists not in *arriving* at perfection, but in having as our ideal the *wish* to be perfect. *We* like giving pleasure to those we love, just as people in the world do. A good wife does many hard things for her husband, and forgets they are hard, because all the time she is thinking of her love for him. So *we* must say to Our Lord; ‘I think only of You, dear Lord, I love only You, and I care for nothing but Your love. Such love is true love.’

On the evening of the Feast of Our Lady’s Presentation, November 21, the students, according to time-honoured custom, gave a dramatic performance. They had chosen a Scriptural idyll based on the story of Tobias. Sister Superior was present and, though evidently suffering, insisted on staying till the end, when she called the players down from the stage that she might see their costumes more closely. After she had spoken a few gracious words, one of them said “Sister Superior, you are very tired; we must not keep you any longer.” Then the *Angel Raphael* came forward smilingly, “Sister Superior, I will guide you to your room,” and taking her by the hand she led her out of the hall and through the long corridor. The memory of that little incident remains still with those who were present. It was Sister Mary of St. Philip’s last visit to the College.

Two days later, she had a lengthy interview with Canon Rooney of Darlington, who had called to discuss educational problems. She was with the Community as usual during that day, and after the evening visit to the Blessed Sacrament she went to Confession. It was her custom to spend some time in thanksgiving, and the Sister Sacristan, noticing that she left the chapel somewhat hurriedly, informed Sister Mary Angela,

who found that Sister Mary of St. Philip was suffering from a severe chill. Next day the doctor would not allow her to get up, but she was bright and cheerful, and occupied herself by answering letters.

On the following Sunday, November 27, Dr. Bligh still refusing to allow her to leave her bed, she seemed to have a presentiment that her illness was serious. Often before she had pressed him to let her do as she wished in matters where her health was concerned, and, knowing her splendid vitality, he had allowed himself to be persuaded, but now he was resolute. The novena in preparation for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception was to begin on the Tuesday.

"The intensity of purpose with which Sister Superior prepared, and made the whole house prepare, to celebrate the jubilee," writes Sister Francis Xaveria, "was truly remarkable. We could not help feeling that there was some special and hidden meaning in it all. It was in reality the immediate preparation for her own call from this world, whether made consciously or unconsciously we know not. She never uttered a single complaint, or asked for any refreshment, although she suffered from intense thirst. To the very end, as through all her life, she thought only of others. On the evening of December 2, remembering that it was the Feast of St. Francis Xavier, she sent for me and said: 'Dear, I am so sorry to be ill on your Feast.' 'Never mind, Sister Superior, you will soon be well again.' She looked at me seriously, and said 'Do you know, I feel as if I were on the island of Sancian.' Just for a moment I was puzzled by the words, till I realised that she was alluding to the place where St. Francis Xavier died. I replied quickly, 'Oh! you must not say that. Our Lord will soon cure you,' but my heart had been pierced by the suggestion of her going. Then with characteristic thoughtfulness she said, 'You must be sure to have a good look at the beautiful book your sister sent me yesterday.'"

On the sixth, as she seemed no better, she herself suggested that a nursing Sister should be engaged, as her nights were so troublesome that she feared the Sister Infirmarian would be overtired. That evening she sent for all the Sisters who taught in the elementary schools, and asked them how they intended

to celebrate the coming Feast of Our Lady, exhorting them to do all in their power to inspire the children with love for Mary Immaculate.

On the morning of the eighth she received Holy Communion fasting, but the effort completely exhausted her. Later in the day, she recovered, and sent again for the school Sisters to wish them a happy Feast, and to hear of the way in which they had honoured Our Lady. She told them how consoled she had been by an incident which had just been related to her. When the Sister who called the students went to the dormitory that morning to awaken them by saying the usual *aspiration*, they had responded by singing a verse of the hymn "Immaculate."

After Benediction, as her girls walked in procession through the corridor, the strains of the same hymn reached the sick room, and Sister Mary of St. Philip sang with them, as she had always loved to sing. The day had been full of deep and varied emotions for her, and she was greatly fatigued, but, gracious as ever, she insisted on seeing the Superiors of four American Houses of Notre Dame who were her guests for a few days.

On the morrow Dr. Bligh advised Father Walshe to administer the Last Sacraments, not because he apprehended imminent danger, but so that she might receive Holy Communion in Viaticum. Father Walshe told her of the doctor's wish, and she was so little perturbed by it that he afterwards remarked to one of the Sisters: "She is indeed a wonderful woman. I had not to make it easy for her, rather it was she who made it easy for me. When I suggested the Last Sacraments she said quite calmly, 'Yes, Father, whatever you wish.'" She seemed concerned about only one thing—that the Sisters might not be made anxious. Accordingly she arranged with Father Walshe that the administration should not take place till after night prayers, and that only a few Sisters should know and be present. She afterwards gave directions regarding what was to be done for the poor at Christmastide, and also remembered some of her students who were in need of a little material help.

"About seven o'clock that evening I arrived at Mount Pleasant," writes Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid, "I went at once to see her, and told her I had come to return her visit to me at Glasgow. She looked very much like her usual self, except that her eyes seemed heavy and tired, and her speech rather laboured. She expressed a wish that I should retire early,

alluding indirectly, no doubt, to the Last Sacraments, which she was to receive at ten o'clock. I showed her by my answer that I quite understood, and meant to be present, at which she seemed relieved. It was a very simple, sweet, and touching ceremony, but we could not realise our dear one was so near her end."

On the next morning she asked for a picture of the Guardian Angel, and one was brought from the College. "I always liked that," she remarked. She was very quiet all day; towards evening she began to say aloud—

"O Paradise, O Paradise, I greatly long to see"

but she was too weak to continue, and, as Sister Mary of Xavier took up the words, she slowly raised her hands and clasped them in prayer.

When she was told that the Sisters had undertaken to keep up a perpetual Rosary for her recovery she said: "Oh, you must not let them tire themselves by saying extra prayers, ask them to offer up *perfect days* for me."

There was a consultation of doctors on the tenth, and their verdict left little room for hope; it was probably a question of but a few days before the end. She expressed a wish for more pictures of Saints to be placed about the room, and selected certain chapters of *The Imitation of Christ* to be read to her. A Sister, who was sitting with her, drew her attention to the chattering of the starlings on the window-sill. She smiled and said "Poor little things! do get them some crumbs."

It was evident that she fully realised the hopelessness of her condition, though she was ready to do whatever the Sisters thought might help her to recover. His Lordship—Dr. White-side—called to see her and gave her his blessing.

So the days passed, and her weakness increased alarmingly. Father Walshe, whose devoted kindness in these dark days can never be forgotten by the Sisters of Mount Pleasant, suggested that there should be a general Communion on the octave of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception to obtain Sister Superior's restoration to health, but Mary answered her children's prayers in another and a better way. On this same day Sister Mary of St. Philip sent for Sister Francis Xaveria

and said : " Dear, I have been asking the doctor when it will be." " When what will be, dear Sister Superior?" She answered calmly, " When Our Lord will come for me—will it be to-day or to-morrow?" Then, as an afterthought, came the remark : " You see Saturday or Sunday would be such nice days because all the Sisters would be at home." Then again, " Tell the Sisters I am sorry for what I ought to have done for them, and have not done." Later on, she sent once more for Sister Francis Xaveria and said : " Sister, I wish to die under holy Obedience, so I resign my authority now into your hands, and I will do nothing without your permission. You are my Superior." Sister Francis Xaveria was too deeply moved to reply.

In the afternoon, she was able to receive Holy Communion; she expressed a wish that as many Sisters as possible should be present. The door of her room was left open, and those outside distinctly heard every word of her renewal of her vows.

On Friday the Bishop brought her the blessing of the Holy Father *in articulo mortis*. She was now very weak though perfectly conscious. At intervals the Sisters stole in, and prayed silently by her bedside; several times she smiled on them sweetly, and said " May Our Lady bless you ! forgive me for all I have done and not done."

By this time the news of her serious condition had become widely known; telegrams and letters of inquiry and sympathy literally poured in—from members of the Hierarchy, from prominent ecclesiastics, from laymen of all denominations, and from educationists all over the country. Messages came from the Mother-House, too, to comfort and sustain the Sisters, for the sorrow of Mount Pleasant was, indeed, the sorrow of the Institute.

One of the strongest impressions left on those who were with Sister Mary of St. Philip during her last days on earth was the consistency—if we may so term it—of her death with her life. Humble, simple, pious, unselfish, she had ever been, and so remained in her hour of trial. Once, when she had just recovered from a distressing attack of faintness, a Sister bathed her forehead with rose-water. " What is that, Sister?" she asked, " A little rose-water, Sister Superior." " Oh, my dear, it ought to be holy water !"

She constantly asked for prayers to be said aloud—the *Hail Mary*, or a decade of the Rosary. One morning Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid, who was helping her to make her thanksgiving after Holy Communion, recited the words of the beautiful hymn, *The Lord of Glory*. When she had finished, the invalid said: “Let me hear that last verse again.” And with a gentle movement of her feeble hands she kept rhythmical beat as she listened to the familiar lines:

“When daylight shineth,
When day declineth,
In storm and sun, abide with me;
In joy and gladness,
In pain and sadness,
O let me, Lord, be close to Thee.
Good Shepherd, feed me,
And guard and lead me
To Thy bright pastures beyond the sea,
To make in glory
(O wondrous story !)
One long Communion eternally.”

Her humour, even in these last days, sometimes rippled gently on the surface of her deep thought. The Sister Infirmarian put down some strips of carpet in order that she might not be disturbed by the sound of frequent footfalls. “My dear,” she said, smilingly, “it is very kind of you, but, it seems to me, the worse I become, the more pieces of carpet you lay down.”

Her thoughtfulness for others and her gratitude shone out more brilliantly as the lamp of her life burned low. She frequently thanked the doctor, apologising for the trouble she was giving him. She was not able to receive many visitors, but Sister Edburga, the Superior of Everton Valley, who afterwards succeeded Sister Mary of St. Philip, called frequently, as did Father Hayes, S.J., a very intimate friend.

She was able to receive Holy Communion on Saturday, the seventeenth, but she was sinking rapidly. Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid wrote:

“There was such a complete casting off of all business; her responsibility dropped from her like a garment, and, with a grand and beautiful simplicity which was all her own, she settled herself down to die. There were no last wishes, no desires. She asked for some Sisters by name, and, when they came in she looked lovingly at them as if to say good-bye.” One of

these was the Sister in charge of the kitchen, a Spaniard, who had passed all her religious life at Mount Pleasant. Sister Mary of St. Philip spoke a few touching words to her, thanking her for all her devotedness.

On Saturday afternoon there were one or two alarming attacks of faintness, and the night was very trying. Quite in the early hours of Sunday morning she begged to receive Holy Communion. Father Walshe, whose charity knew no bounds, brought Our Lord to her about four o'clock. A few minutes before this, Sister Mary Angela asked her if she were in need of anything. Sister Mary of St. Philip turned to her with a radiant face, and said in clear tones : " Oh, my dear, I am so happy, I am going to receive Our Lord, and Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid has been saying such beautiful prayers for me." She remained very quiet all Sunday morning, speaking but rarely. The Sisters came in and prayed by her bedside. Once, she recognised the voice of Sister Francis Xaveria, and, when the decade of the Rosary which they were reciting was finished, she said : " Now, say the Litany of Our Lady of Good Counsel." So to the end did she remember to give pleasure to others.

At midday Dr. Whiteside called again to see her, and then paid a consoling visit to one of the College mistresses, Sister Stanislaus, who was also dying.

As the day wore on there was more than one severe crisis, but each time, after a sharp struggle, she rallied. Ejaculations were frequently suggested, and she gave signs that she followed them. When Sister Francis Xaveria had repeated several times: " My Jesus, I love Thee with my whole heart," Sister Mary of St. Philip opened her eyes and said distinctly : " Ah, yes ! He knows that I love Him."

During the afternoon she turned to Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid with a pathetic smile of farewell.

About six o'clock she seemed to be dying, and the last prayers were begun. She insisted on holding the blessed candle unaided. Father Walshe arrived, but in a few minutes she revived a little, so that it was thought she might possibly last through the night. Between the hours of ten and eleven, however, it was evident that the end was really approaching. Many of the Sisters were praying round her, and Sister Mary of St. Wilfrid, leaning over her, said : " Sister, Father Walshe is here, and he is just going to give you absolution." She was conscious and understood.

Her eyelids quivered, her hand rested on her crucifix, and gently she passed *ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem*. It was the Feast of Our Lady's Expectation, and Sister Mary of St. Philip's sorrowing children rejoiced in the sure hope that Mary was waiting to show to her "the Blessed Fruit of her womb—Jesus."

APPENDIX

Note 1.—Genealogical Table (see inset).

Note 2.—John Nyren (1764–1837), author of *The Young Cricketer's Tutor* and other works on Cricket which were afterwards collected and edited by Cowden Clarke. Of Scottish descent, Nyren was born at Hambledon, in Hampshire. After his marriage with Cleopha Copp he resided for some years at Portsea, and later at Bromley. “A delightful companion by reason of his geniality and sunny humour, he was also an accomplished musician, and his interest in music secured him the warm friendship of the Novellos and their circle, including Leigh Hunt, Malibran, the Cowden Clarkes, etc.” (See *Dictionary of National Biography*.)

Note 3.—We are indebted to the courtesy of the Franciscan Fathers at Stratford for the following details concerning the early history of that Mission :—

The Catholic Mission of Stratford dates back to the year 1789, when the Rev. Thomas Wright, D.D. (Sorbonne) took a house of two storeys and an attic in *Ham Lane*, now *West Ham Lane*. It was known as *The French House*, probably because Dr. Wright strove to eke out his small income by giving lessons in French to the people of the Broadway. He died in 1797. The Abbé Chévrollais, C.M., who before the Revolution had been Professor of Theology at Tréguier, Brittany, built a chapel in High Street, Stratford, which was opened on August 8, 1818, and dedicated to St. Patrick and St. Vincent (see p. 6). As may be seen from the illustration, the chapel had no windows facing the High Street, the Abbé fearing that they might be used as a target by hostile neighbours. The sanctuary was in the part of the building nearest the High Street. When the lease expired, some twenty or thirty years ago, the Rotherhithe Trust (C. of E.) demolished the old chapel, and a hoarding still marks its site. The present church dates from 1868.

The early records of the Mission contain many entries relating

to the families of the Copps, the Nyrens, and the Pitchfords. John Pitchford, the younger, was an executor of the will of the Abbé Chévrollais, who died at Stratford in 1828.

Note 4.—We understand that, eventually, Miss Agnew left England with her small community, and settled near Nice. The nuns followed the Benedictine Rule, and they received English ladies as boarders. Their Convent, which was called *Mount Boron*, was situated on the road from Nice to Villefranche. The Community was not in flourishing circumstances in 1866, and probably died out some years later.

Note 5.—There are now nine Catholic Training Colleges for Women in Great Britain—Liverpool, North Kensington, Glasgow, Salford, Southampton, Hull, Newcastle, Birmingham, and the recently established college at Edinburgh. The report of the Catholic Education Council for the year ending June, 1919, gives 969 as the total number of Women Students in training.

LAURENCE LESCHER¹

Joseph = Martha Bond

Joseph S. = Martha Hoy

Harriet = M. Walmsley
Mary = R. Walmsley
(issue)

Josephine = Wm. Hoy Lescher

Agatha

Theresa
O.S.F.

Winifred = W. Rochford Pyke
(issue)

Mary

Philomena
O.S.B.

Joseph = Mira Hankey
(issue)

Anastasia =
(iss)

O.S.B. Order of St. Benedict.

S.N.D. Sisters of Notre Dame

¹ Of Kertzfeld, Alsace. Barons of the old Kingdom of France by grant of Lo

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